November 2004

Greater Wards Corner Comprehensive Plan

Prepared for: The City of Norfolk Department of Planning and Community Development
The Wards Corner Task Force
The Wards Corner Partnership

by: Wallace Roberts & Todd, LLC, Planners and Urban Designers
Hammer Siler George Associates, Economic Consultants
Kimley-Horn Associates, Traffic and Transportation Consultants

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The plan for the Greater Wards Corner Area is based on an understanding that most of the neighborhoods included in the study are essentially sound, in fact are great assets to the City of Norfolk. A number of targeted initiatives, making use of real-estate market opportunities, can correct the negative pressures on the area and secure its future for many years to come. There are many sound medium-density apartment complexes in the area, but blighted conditions exist in a few high-density apartment buildings in commercial locations.

The market study done for this plan indicates the potential for a new retail district, we are calling the Uptown District, particularly the area between I – 64 and Tidewater Drive along the south side of Little Creek Road. The blighted high-density apartments that have become a high-crime area at the western end of the Texas Streets district in Denby Park are located within this corridor and are the highest priority location for a new initiative. The plan suggests a combination of City and private actions to transform this area into a mid-box retail district with a hotel, and – in later phases - apartments and town houses.

At Wards Corner itself, the plan suggests that, when the property owners in the area are prepared to consider redevelopment, that they rebuild the current strip shopping centers as mid-rise apartments built around private courtyards, with retail on the ground floor of these buildings along Granby Street and Little Creek Road. The City should help make these changes take place by rezoning, by street improvements, and possibly by helping incorporate a few key parcels into the redevelopment.

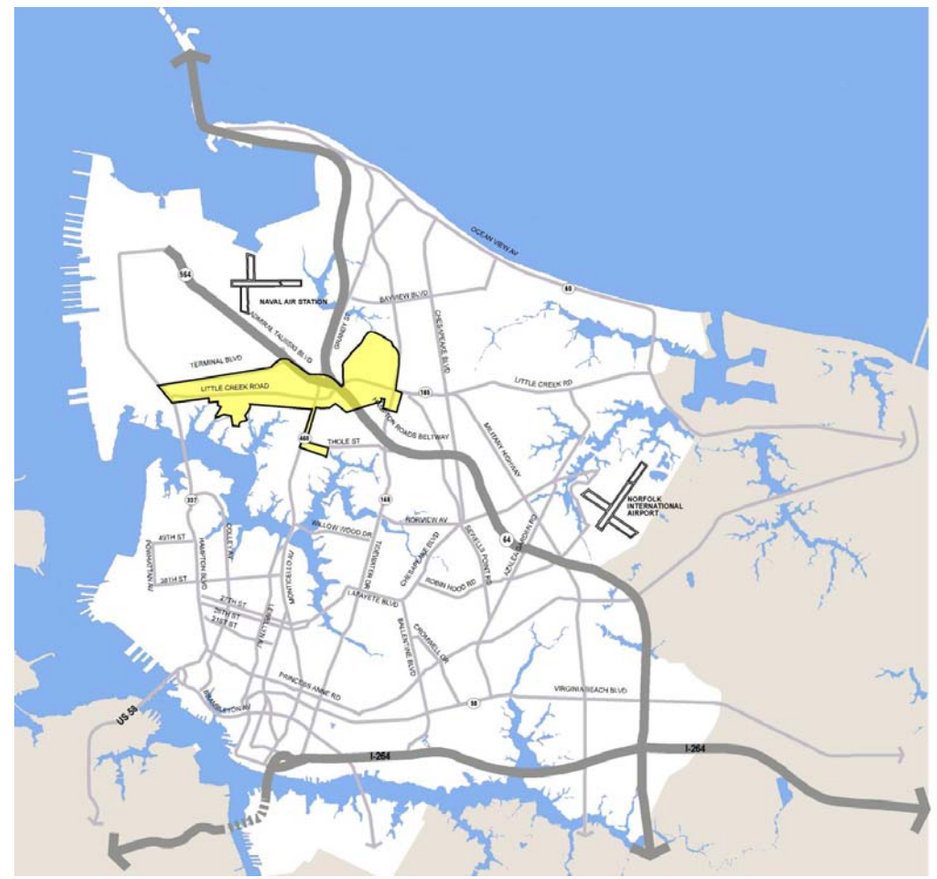
In the retail district of Titustown there are crime conditions which are a miniature version of the crime problems in Denby Park and are also traceable to a few high-density apartments in commercial locations. The plan suggests the acquisition of two of these blighted apartment buildings, reorganized shared parking, and the addition of two new commercial buildings as a means to make the area a much more effective neighborhood retail center.

The acquisition of the former Jewish Community Center by the City for use as a wellness or recreation center will be a major asset for the Greater Wards Corner area and the entire city.

The plan also suggests that, over time, some of the small apartment buildings along Little Creek Road which are a potential source of blight could be replaced by single-family town houses. The plan illustrates how this could happen and suggests appropriate changes in the zoning when the real-estate market for town houses becomes viable in these locations.

LEGEND

- Highway
- Main Roads
- Study Area



BACKGROUND FOR THE WARDS CORNER STUDY

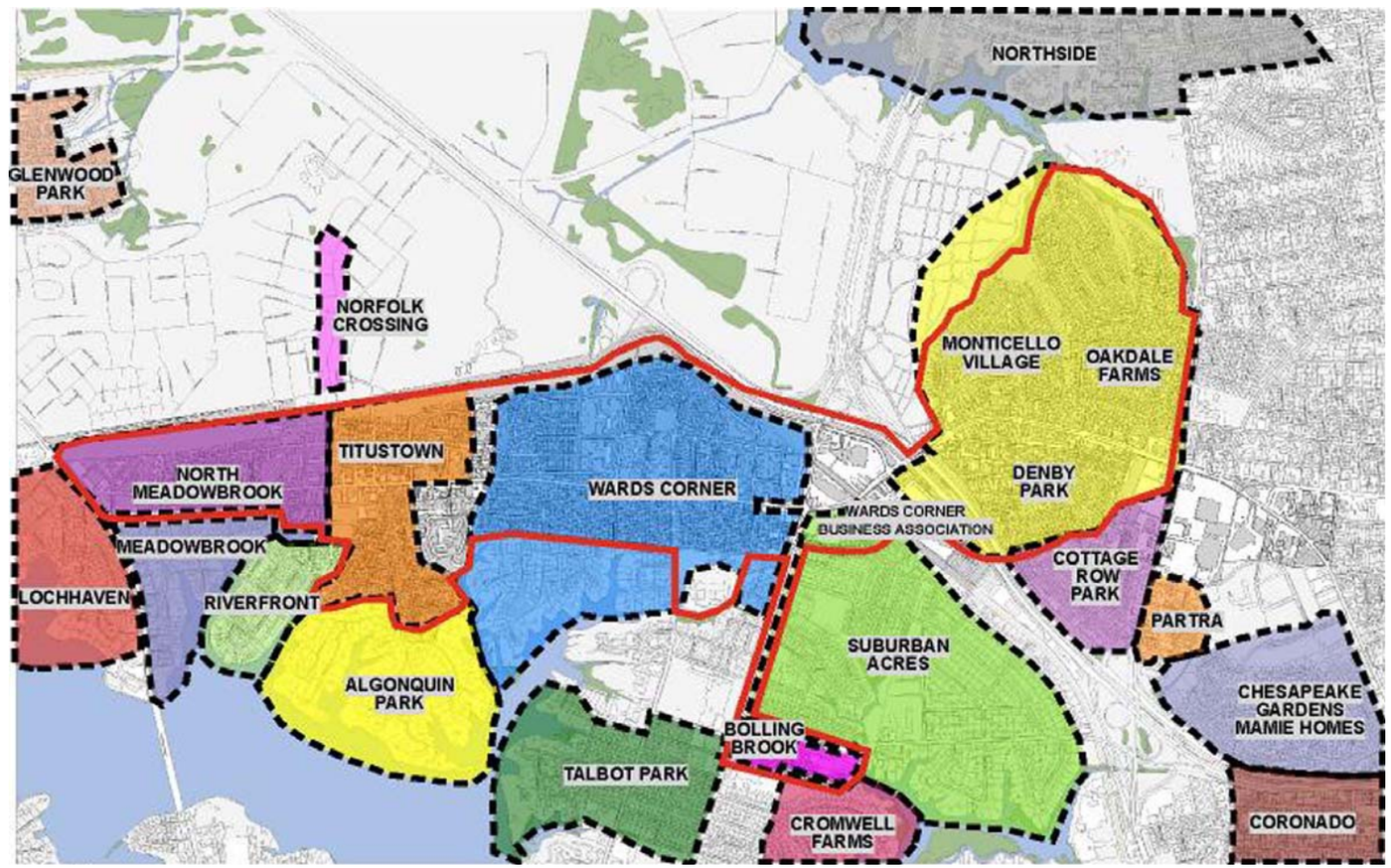
Back when trolley cars still ran on Granby Street out to the amusement park in Ocean View, Wards Corner was a thriving retail district, a magnet for some of Norfolk's prime residential neighborhoods. Older residents can remember when there was a branch of a downtown Norfolk department store, Smith and Welton, and other similar stores at Wards Corner. Today, Smith and Welton has long been out of business, and retailing at Wards Corner has changed. Retailing today requires more car spaces and different kinds of buildings; the coming of Interstate 64 has changed access patterns. While Wards Corner is still a viable retail location, it is not the prime destination it once was. Farther east on Little Creek Road, the Southern Shopping Center and a K-Mart offer more car spaces and the kinds of buildings commonly used by retailers today. The recent announcement that Wal-Mart will open a 207,000 square foot SuperCenter across from the Southern Shopping Center in 2006 means more competition for stores at Wards Corner.

The residential neighborhoods in the greater Wards Corner area provide a variety of residences from some of Norfolk's finest homes to more modest houses and garden apartments. Recently a concentration of drug sales and other criminal activity in apartment buildings in Denby Park and other neighborhoods along Little Creek Road has created serious problems for residents and concern about the future of the whole area.

The Wards Corner Task Force and the Wards Corner Partnership encouraged the City of Norfolk to conduct a comprehensive study of ways to revitalize retail in the Greater Wards Corner Area and protect the residential neighborhoods from disinvestment and deterioration. The study area was determined with input from the Wards Corner Task Force. To help guide this effort, these community stakeholders crafted an initial "Vision of the Greater Wards Corner Area" in April, 2003. The City of Norfolk then retained Wallace, Roberts & Todd, LLC - along with Hammer, Siler, George, economic consultants, and Kimley-Horn Associates, transportation consultants - to prepare a Comprehensive Plan for the Greater Wards Corner Area, working with the Wards Corner Task Force and Partnership.

LEGEND

Study Area



On October 7, 2003 the City of Norfolk held a community meeting at the Granby High School in order for the consultants to make a progress report on their work to the community and to revise and refine the previous Vision Statement prepared by the Wards Corner Task Force and the Wards Corner Partnership. What came out of this discussion is the following set of principles and priority actions for the Comprehensive Plan for the Greater Wards Corner Area.

PRINCIPLES

- *Use City powers and new investment to eliminate blighting influence of high-crime areas and encourage maintenance through comprehensive code enforcement*
- *Create a vibrant new mix of quality retail, entertainment and local services responding to the needs and preferences of local residents as well as the regional trading area*
- *Encourage a new, more urban pattern of development in Wards Corner; one with a lively mix of uses, a pedestrian orientation and a renewed sense of place*
- *Encourage diversification of the housing stock, with quality higher density housing interspersed with retail to generate an active pedestrian environment*
- *Enhance the scenic character and more efficient vehicular and pedestrian travel patterns along Little Creek Road and other highway corridors*
- *Improve amenities to help re-establish Wards Corner neighborhoods as among the most desirable in all of Norfolk for families of various economic means*

PRIORITY ACTIONS FOR RETAIL

- *Create a new mix of local retail, restaurants and quality, high density housing in the historic Wards Corner retail center*
- *Plan for a new "uptown" district that extends from Tidewater Drive to I-64 including regional retail, local retail, office space, market-rate rental residences and a hotel*
- *Seek redevelopment of blighted, crime-plagued properties along Little Creek Road from I-64 to Southern Shopping Center*

PRIORITY ACTIONS FOR NEIGHBORHOODS

- *Retain and enhance the existing single family housing stock through code compliance, promoting home ownership, and investments in housing renovation*
- *Encourage single family house in-fill development and ensure that it is well-integrated in style and scale with established patterns*
- *Encourage town homes and market-rate rentals in under-used or deteriorated locations along Little Creek Road to diversify the housing stock at the high end of the market*
- *Improve and enhance public facilities and parks which are well-maintained, staffed, and programmed to offer a variety of activities to engage children and youth*
- *Retain the former Jewish Community Center site as a location zoned for institutional use, as it is an important recreational, open space and civic resource*
- *Redesign the Titustown Neighborhood Retail District as a "village center" with goods and services oriented to serving local residents as well as traffic on Little Creek Road*

PRIORITY ACTIONS FOR ROADWAY CORRIDORS

- *Place utilities underground and enhance streetscapes at key locations with high pedestrian activity such as the Titustown "village center", and the historic Wards Corner "town center"*
- *Reduce peak period traffic congestion through improved signal timing and intersection configurations, and reduced delays due to left-turning vehicles at critical locations*
- *Make vehicular and pedestrian circulation safer and more pleasant by traffic calming and street designs which enhance pedestrian safety and overcome barrier conditions*
- *Enhance tree canopy and landscaped buffers, transforming West Little Creek Road as a scenic "green boulevard"*
- *Enhance streetscape at important "gateway" locations such as the Little Creek Road intersections at Hampton Boulevard, Granby Street and Tidewater Drive*

COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

The over-all impression for a visitor to Wards Corner is of a residential area with many sound neighborhoods and houses, and many well-managed garden apartment complexes in good condition. Granby Street is a grand civic street for much of its length, and the recently renovated Granby High School is an impressive civic building. Algonquin Park and Riverfront, waterfront neighborhoods that are closely related to Wards Corner although they are not part of the study area, are among the finest Norfolk residential locations.

The Wards Corner Task Force requested that the Bollingbrook neighborhood, just off Granby Street near Thole Street, be evaluated as part of this plan. Several properties in this small neighborhood have been neglected while a few other have been boarded up. Over the years, two large institutions in the immediate area have, in essence, acted as redevelopment agents in this neighborhood without city assistance. Additional code enforcement by the City is recommended for the area to prevent further decline of properties in this neighborhood.

Little Creek Road is the main east-west street through the area. It is one of the main access corridors to the Naval Base, which has an entrance off Hampton Boulevard just north of the western end of Little Creek. Little Creek is a busy street, heavily trafficked at rush hours. The freight railway line to the Norfolk International Terminals, which crosses both Little Creek Road and Granby Street at grade, can add to the congestion.

The retail buildings at Granby Street and Little Creek Road, the traditional Wards Corner location, are serviceable, but little more. A filling station on the north-east corner and the jumble of utility poles and overhead wires detract from the over-all appearance of the area. Parking is congested and confusing. To the east across the railway track is a conventional strip commercial area with immediate access from I – 64. The Farm Fresh store has recently been renovated, and the City of Norfolk has plans to put government offices into the vacant Ames department store building on the opposite side of Little Creek Road.

The zoning map at right provides an informative overview of the Wards Corner area. Single-family residential properties zoned from R – 1 through R – 9 are color coded yellow on this map. In general this type of residential development is in sound condition, although some of it is under pressure from problems in adjacent higher-density properties. Large garden apartments complexes in the area are generally well-maintained. They usually fall within the R – 11 and R – 12 zones, coded light orange on the map.

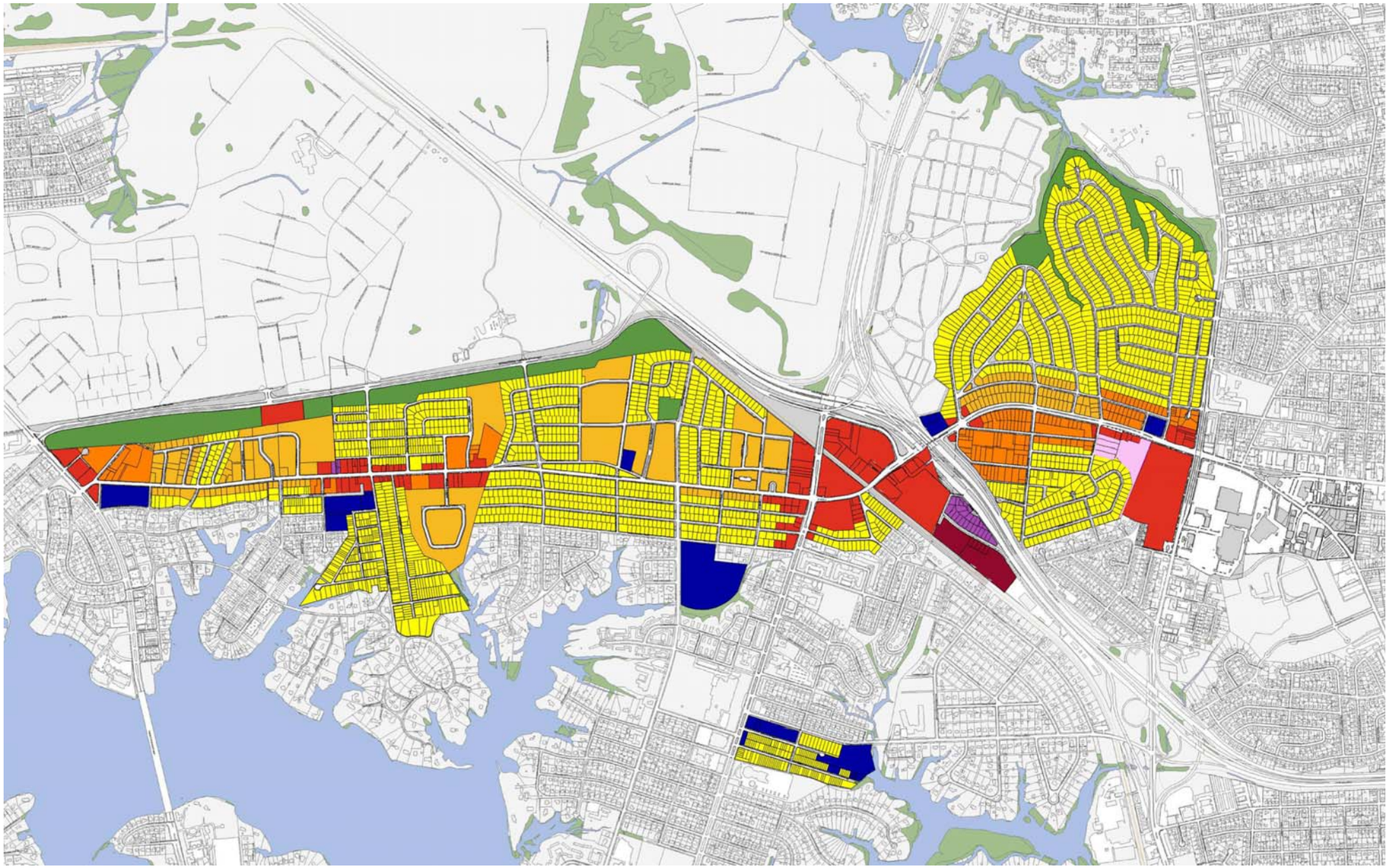
Some of the worst problems in the area have been created by walk-up apartment blocks dropped into small residential sites, some as small as individual house lots, along Little Creek Road. This type of development is no longer permitted under the Norfolk zoning code adopted in 1992 but is classified under the R – 13 through R – 15 categories in the code, shown as a darker orange on the map.

When you ask the police department where the biggest law enforcement problems are in the Wards Corner area, they point to the smaller properties, coded the darker orange tone for R – 13 through R – 15, immediately accessible from Little Creek Road. The worst concentration of such troubled properties is on Little Creek just east of Interstate 64, in the area of Denby Park called the Texas Streets.

The combination of poor-quality apartment buildings that can never be a first-choice residential location, a prime retail location on a main road just off an Interstate, plus drive-through parking lots, has created an ideal environment for drug-dealing that has attracted criminal elements from the whole Hampton Roads area and beyond. Despite intensive police department efforts, the consensus is that the area is getting more difficult to control and serving as the base for more extensive criminal activity. It is endangering the stability of the residential neighborhoods around.

A comparable set of circumstance can be found in a few locations in the Titustown area, although they are far more manageable by the police. Titustown itself has benefited from an extensive housing conservation effort by the City, plus a new Recreation Center, that has facilitated new investment in houses in the area. Titustown's traditional retail district along Little Creek just west of Diven Street could be a much better local service center with improved parking and some new store buildings.

The whole question of the residential frontages along Little Creek Road also needs resolution, as Little Creek is heavily travelled. Along some stretches of West Little Creek Road, individual yards are small and homes and driveways don't relate well to the high traffic volumes of the area. Some properties especially those closer to Hampton Boulevard continue to be maintained while other have transitioned to rental properties that have been allowed to deteriorate. We are suggesting ways in which town homes could be placed on these lots as an alternative to single family homes in problem areas.



LEGEND

- Residential R1 - R9
- Residential R11 & R12
- Residential R13, R14 & R15
- Commercial
- Light Industrial
- General Industrial
- Institutions
- Open Space
- MHP Mobile Home Park

Despite these problems, however, the regional economic overview and the residential and commercial market analysis beginning below, show that the Greater Wards Corner area has tremendous future potential as both a desirable commercial destination and as a location for new market-rate and condominium apartments. A few targeted interventions using city powers and private investment can both reduce current problems and open up the area's latent development potential.

Regional Economic Overview

Hammer, Siler, George has reviewed the trends in the region that might impact the long-term growth, and therefore housing and retailing prospects, for the City of Norfolk in general and the Wards Corner community specifically.

In regional terms, the City of Norfolk is a sub-sector of the Hampton Roads metropolitan area. The metropolitan area is composed of sixteen cities and counties. The cities in the region, in addition to Norfolk, include Portsmouth, Virginia Beach, Chesapeake, Suffolk, Hampton, Newport News, Williamsburg, Franklin and Poquoson. The counties include Southampton, Isle of Wight, Surry, James City, Gloucester, and York.

Regional Population Trends

Over the twenty-year period 1980-2000, the population of the metropolitan area within the boundaries of the Hampton Roads Planning District Commission has increased by 376,000 persons. This represented an increase of over 30% or an annual average of approximately 1.5 percent per year.

The bulk of this growth occurred in two jurisdictions. Virginia Beach gained an additional 165,601 residents and Chesapeake gained an additional 90,214. These two jurisdictions therefore captured nearly 70 percent of the total regional growth. When looked at on an annual percentage basis, the City of Chesapeake grew at a rate of approximately 3.7 percent while the City of Virginia Beach grew at a rate of about 3 percent. The strong growth rates in these two jurisdictions clearly explain why the private development community has been focused on these two communities, with respect to both housing and retail development, over the past two decades. The general orientation of the development community is to focus on high growth markets.

Anchored by these strong growth markets, the region has other emerging markets over the past decade, in portions of Suffolk, Hampton, Newport News, and James City County. The development community has also been responding to these growth market opportunities.

During this same period, the City of Norfolk has been in the process of reinventing itself through massive development projects, waters edge renewal projects, and downtown redevelopment. The ability of the city to implement these improvement projects even in the face of population losses, a reluctant development community, and the pull factor to new suburban type cities within the region is evidence of the City of Norfolk's economic strength in the region and its ability to generate new market opportunities.

TABLE 1. POPULATION TRENDS 1980-2000

HAMPTON ROADS

Cities and Counties	1980 Population	2000 Population	Change
Hampton Roads	1,214,390	1,590,400	376,010
Southeastern Virginia	849,947	1,095,400	245,453
Chesapeake	114,486	204,700	90,214
Norfolk	266,979	234,500	-32,479
Portsmouth	104,577	99,700	-4,877
Suffolk	47,621	65,600	17,979
Virginia Beach	262,199	427,800	165,601
Franklin	7,723	8,400	677
Isle of Wight County	22,000	30,100	8,100
Southampton County	18,316	17,600	-716
Surry County	6,046	7,000	954
Non metro	54,085	63,100	9,015
Peninsula	364,443	495,000	130,557
Gloucester County	20,101	35,000	14,899
Hampton	122,617	147,300	24,683
James City County	22,339	49,400	27,061
Newport News	144,903	181,100	36,197
Poquoson	8,726	11,500	2,774
Williamsburg	10,294	12,000	1,706
York County	35,463	58,700	23,237

Source: U.S. Census, Hampton Roads Planning District Commission, and Hammer, Siler, George Associates

Regional Employment Trends

There has been an increase in regional employment over the last several decades. However while there was substantial growth during the 1980-1990 period, the amount of growth slowed down between 1990 and 2000. As Table 2 shows, the total number of jobs in the Hampton Roads Planning District increased from 654,765 in 1980 to 863,758 in 1990. This represented an increase of nearly 32% over the 1980 job base. This increase was generally across the board in the key job categories, with major job increases found in retail trade, finance, insurance and real estate, services and government, especially in the military category.

TABLE 2.	REGIONAL EMPLOYMENT TRENDS		
Geographic Area	1980	1990	2000
Farm	3,953	2,454	2,116
Agricultural Services, FF	4,032	6,285 (D)	
Mining	152	422 (D)	
Construction	33,946	48,671	57,278
Manufacturing	71,245	74,428	71,219
Transportation and Public Utilities	25,989	31,860	38,034
Wholesale Trade	22,169	28,278	30,399
Retail Trade	89,525	137,767	159,937
Finance Insurance and Real Estate	39,760	50,104	63,264
Services	122,834	200,780	271,065
Government	241,160	282,709	257,967
Total	654,765	863,758	951,279

Source: Bureau of Economic Analysis and Hammer Siler George Associates

Job growth continued, but slowed between 1990 and 2000. As Table 2 shows, the total number of jobs in the region increased from 863,758 in 1990 to an estimated 951,279 in 2000. This represented an increase of only about 10 percent or about one-third the performance of the previous ten-year period. Unlike the ten-year period, 1980-1990, there have not been increases across the board. In fact there have been losses in manufacturing and also losses in federal civilian and military employment. These losses are in line with manufacturing and Federal and civilian job losses in the whole U.S. during the 1990's.

However, despite these losses the job base of the area has continued to expand and serve as the catalyst for continued regional economic growth.

The City in the Region

In many ways the cities of Norfolk and Portsmouth serve as the core of the region. This is in part because of their geographic location but also because of their very strong military infrastructure. Both are also among the older cities having the highest density rates and the least amount of land resources for new development. These are conditions that make it difficult to compete in a housing market largely oriented to a single-family housing product.

In 1980 the population of the City of Norfolk was 266,979 by 2000 the population was estimated to have declined to 234,500 residents. This loss of nearly 32,500 residents, or about 12 percent of its population, has hurt the image of Norfolk as a development opportunity, although there has been some evidence recently that the city may be returning to positive growth.

According to the Hampton Roads Planning District Commission (HRPDC), employment is expected to increase over the next 30 years in the Hampton Roads area, which includes the communities in southeastern Virginia and on the Peninsula. Although Norfolk and Portsmouth saw employment decrease from 1900 to 2000, the HRPDC predicts a long-term increase in employment for all Hampton Roads counties and cities. However, employment in Norfolk is not expected to increase as much as Chesapeake and Virginia Beach.

These overall trends must be kept in mind in framing any discussion with respect to market opportunities in the Wards Corner Study Area where population growth, household formation, and the expansion of retail expenditure potential must be generated primarily by in-migration and a reduction in household size.

WARDS CORNER RESIDENTIAL MARKET ANALYSIS

In this section of the report Hammer Siler George Associates analyzes the current housing market in the Wards Corner Study Area and projects how many housing units the neighborhood can absorb over the next five to ten years. The analysis below examines both the ownership and rental market potentials.

In order to determine how many housing units can be absorbed by the market over the study period, the following methodology is used.

- An analysis of the neighborhood has been conducted to determine how many units are currently for sale in this market and to gain an understanding of the character and condition of existing units in this neighborhood.
- Census data was collected for population, households, household income and characteristics of housing units for 2000. This was supplemented with 2002 estimates from Claritas to evaluate the demographic trends in this neighborhood.
- Residential sales data, obtained from the Multiple Listing Service, was used for the following:
  - To determine the total housing sales from 1998-2003
  - To assess the character of housing that has sold during this time
  - To determine the average annual and monthly absorption
  - In-flow potential is estimated based on existing new competition and the potential impact of the proposed new regional retail focus.

Housing Market Demographics

It is important to note at the outset of this analysis that the trade area used for the residential market analysis is always smaller than that used for the retail analysis, because people shop in many places and have much more specific requirements for their homes. Demographic trends and projections make up a key component of current and future housing market potential, and as such, several additional demographic variables are necessary to calculate housing market potential including the number of households by household income and the proportion of renters and owners. The demographics of the Wards Corner residential trade area are presented below.

TABLE 3. WARDS CORNER RESIDENTIAL TRADE AREA DEMOGRAPHICS

Year/Demographic	Population	Households	Average Household Income
2002 Total	12,712	5,492	$42,060
2000 Total	12,860	5,549	$39,024
1990 Total	13,041	5,540	$28,110

Source: U.S. Census and Claritas

Wards Corner Residential Trade Area

The primary trade area used for this analysis is the Wards Corner Study area as shown on the map on page 2.

An important component to the forecasting, especially for apartment housing, is the breakdown of population by age. Since most apartment rentals are working age, we looked at that sector of the population in both the Wards Corner Study area as well as the City as a whole, as shown below.

TABLE 4. POPULATION BY AGE, STUDY AREA AND CITYWIDE

	Study Area		City of Norfolk	
Under 18 years	3,253	25.30%	56,352	24.00%
18 to 21 years	1,217	9.50%	25,643	10.90%
22 to 24 years	1,045	8.10%	17,040	7.30%
25 to 29 years	1,296	10.10%	19,873	8.50%
30 to 34 years	931	7.20%	16,747	7.10%
35 to 39 years	959	7.50%	17,408	7.40%
40 to 44 years	878	6.80%	16,161	6.90%
45 to 49 years	735	5.70%	13,839	5.90%
50 to 54 years	520	4.00%	11,171	4.80%
55 to 59 years	384	3.00%	8,143	3.50%
60 to 64 years	310	2.40%	6,494	2.80%
65 years and over	1,332	10.40%	25,532	10.90%
Total population:	**12,860**	**100.00%**	**234,403**	**100.00%**
Core Working Age	5,703	44.30%	103,342	44.10%

Note: the Core Working Age is defined as 25 to 59.

Source: US Census 2000

Households by Household Income

The number of households in a given income range is important in assessing latent residential demand. For instance, it is estimated that the average buyer will be able to purchase a home selling for 2.5 times their annual income. For a household earning $50,000, this represents a mortgage valued at $125,000, generally considered to be market-rate housing. The Wards Corner area has

TABLE 5. HOUSEHOLDS BY HOUSEHOLD TENURE AND HOUSEHOLD INCOME, 2000

	Ownership Units		Rental Units	
Household Income	Units	% of Total	Units	% of Total
Less than $5,000	51	3.20%	188	7.70%
$5,000 to $9,999	74	4.70%	210	8.60%
$10,000 to $14,999	61	3.80%	228	9.30%
$15,000 to $19,999	102	6.40%	362	14.80%
$20,000 to $24,999	81	5.10%	312	12.80%
$25,000 to $34,999	227	14.30%	494	20.20%
$35,000 to $49,999	329	20.70%	349	14.30%
$50,000 to $74,999	413	26.00%	207	8.50%
$75,000 to $99,999	109	6.90%	75	3.10%
$100,000 to $149,999	110	6.90%	6	0.20%
$150,000 or more	34	2.10%	15	0.60%
Total	1,591	100.00%	2,446	100.00%

Source: US Census

nearly 1,000 households earning more than $50,000, or 24 percent of all occupied household units.

It is equally important to analyze both ownership and rental households. Rental households with significant incomes are potential targets for ownership housing. Likewise, ownership households are targets to move up, creating more demand and freeing up existing housing stock.

Home Ownership v. Renting

Another important indicator of potential demand for residential units comes from the number of households who rent as opposed to own. Approximately 59.5 percent of the housing units in the study area are renter occupied and 32.6 percent are owner occupied. There are approximately 475 vacant housing units.

Estimated Ownership Housing Demand

The existing renters in the immediate and neighboring markets are potential buyers in the Wards Corner housing market. By analyzing household demographic trends we can begin to set the base level of potential demand for housing units in the Wards Corner area.

TABLE 6. HOUSING UNITS BY TENURE, 2002 ESTIMATES

2002 Housing Units:	Units	% of Total
Owner-Occupied Housing Units	1,944	32.60%
Renter-Occupied Housing Units	3,548	59.50%
Vacant Housing Units	475	7.90%
Total	5,967	100.00%

Source: Claritas

Wards Corner Potential Demand

An excellent source of new homeowners in a given neighborhood are the existing residents with sufficient income that are currently renting. Certainly not all wish to purchase a residence, however this "universe" is the best starting point for projecting future potential. Based on the number of households with sufficient income and the percentage of renters, a base existing market of 1,450 households is calculated. Based on Census figures relating to length of stay in rental units, we estimate that 10 percent of the rental housing units "roll over" each year. This accounts for 145 rental households in the market. In addition, on average five percent of owner-occupied units roll over each year as well. Using the same income thresholds, this results in an additional 65 units, for a total of 210 active households on the market. Although it is not likely that all 210 households will seek to purchase in the neighborhood, the potential exists provided that the right product is offered at the right price. Below we compare these findings to the actual sales trends in the Wards Corner area.

Past Sales Trends, City-wide Residential Sales Trends

Sales in Norfolk over the 1997-2002 period have been relatively strong with over 11,900 home sales. Housing sales in Norfolk fall geographically into 3 sales areas, Area 11, 12 and 13. These areas divide the city in thirds with the Wards Corner Study area primarily in Area 11. In terms of location of the sales, Area 12, south-east Norfolk east of Tidewater drive, had the largest share of sales with 36.6 percent. Area 11, the area west of Tidewater and north to the Base, had the second largest share of sales with 35.8 percent.

In terms of sales by price point, the majority of sales in the City of Norfolk were in the $25,000 to $125,000 range. It is important to note that over 30 percent of all home sales occurred in units priced below $75,000 and thus below new construction/rehab construction thresholds. These sales trends suggest that the Norfolk housing market is doing well, but that there is room for improvement and growth given the right mix of housing product.

Table 7. Properties Sales in Norfolk, 1997-2002

Price Range	Sales	% of Market
Under 25,000	400	3.30%
25,000-75,000	3,508	29.40%
75,000-125,000	4,556	38.10%
125,000-175,000	1,538	12.90%
175,000-225,000	703	5.90%
225,000-300,000	659	5.50%
Over 300,000	580	4.90%
Total	11,944	100.00%

Source: Nancy Chandler Associates

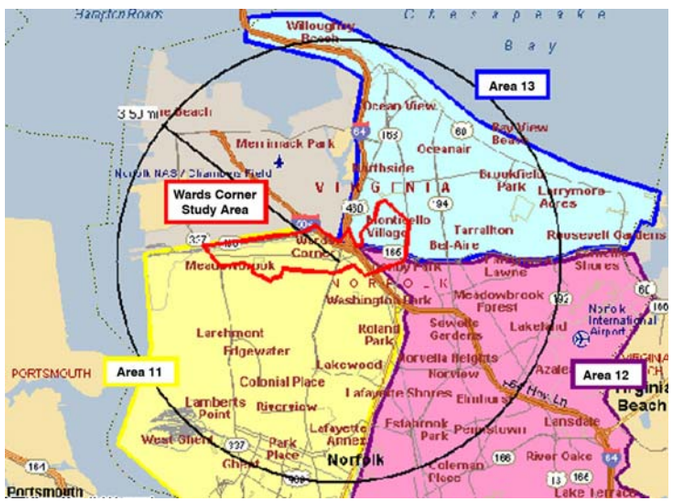


TABLE 8. HOUSING SALES IN WARDS CORNER 1998-2003

Price Range	Total Sales	Average Sales Price	Average List Price	% of Market
Under 25,000	13	19,369	20,908	1.90%
25,000-75,000	269	55,902	58,033	39.20%
75,000-125,000	317	94,432	95,586	46.10%
125,000-175,000	49	122,732	144,479	7.10%
175,000-225,000	17	183,253	194,547	2.50%
225,000-300,000	12	231,367	252,192	1.70%
Over 300,000	10	360,460	360,460	1.50%
Total	**687**			**100.00%**

Source: Nancy Chandler Associates

Active Housing Sales Market

It is also important to identify and analyze the active listings in the Wards Corner Area. This provides necessary insight as to the existing market as well as filtering the near-term demand projections. Table 9 presents the currently for sale single family residential properties on the market.

Table 9. ACTIVE LISTINGS, OCT 2003

Price Range	Count	List Price	% of Market
Under 25,000	-	-	0.00%
25,000-75,000	12	62,175	34.30%
75,000-125,000	19	93,642	54.30%
125,000-175,000	2	135,750	5.70%
175,000-225,000	-	-	0.00%
225,000-300,000	-	-	0.00%
Over 300,000	2	972,500	5.70%
	35		100.00%

Source: Nancy Chandler Associates

Ownership Housing Forecasts

Based on renter demand and actual past sales history, Hammer, Siler, George Associates projects a base annual low of 600 sales and a high of 735 sales over the next five years in the Wards Corner housing market. This translates into 120 to 147 units of for sale single-family housing per year.

Inflow Potential

Because new housing is generally more attractive than older existing housing and the potential reprogramming of the Wards Corner area as an Uptown District, there will likely be solid in-flow sales into the market. Based on our assessment of these factors, we project a 15-20% inflow factor above the base forecast. That would result in total sales of 690 to 880 over the next five years or approximately 140 to 175 per year. (Note: This figure includes existing units priced below new construction thresholds.)

Sales Forecast by Type

For this analysis we have broken down the absorption projections by housing sales price range and then compared this with the number of houses in that price range that are currently active in the market. This process produces guidelines for when new housing or renovation projects should be introduced in the market.

The primary implication for the Wards Corner housing market is that this neighborhood is primarily a "market-rate" housing market. The price range for market rate townhouse purchase is assumed to be $125,000 to $200,000. With mortgages offered at 2.5 times household income, this means households with incomes of $50,000 and over would qualify.

Although the past sales market analysis above suggests that the market can support 56 units per year in the under $75,000 price range, this range of housing is below new construction or even rehab-construction pricing and thus additional units cannot be added to the market without significant subsidy. Units priced in the $75,000-$125,000 range would be available as rehab units and custom infill housing, but again would not be targeted new to the market. These homes will continue to turn over and be re-sold, but no plans should be made to incorporate more like-units in the neighborhood. However, because this housing stock exists and continues to be re-sold, the forecast will include these "existing" units turnover.

As is discussed in greater detail in the recommendations at the end of this report, townhouse development is the preferred new single-family housing type for this area. This is due to primarily to the site constraints in the study area, as well as the City overall. There are very few available sites in the Wards Corner study area and those that are available do not lend themselves well to single family detached units. As the proposed site plans show, townhouse development allows for maximum use of available and in-fill sites, and marries well with retail and commercial uses. We forecast that the Wards Corner Study area can absorb 100 to 125 new construction town house units a year over the next five years.

Rental Housing Market Analysis

The rental housing potential in the Wards Corner market is more difficult to quantify. This is primarily because over the past few years, the rental units in the City of Norfolk have actually declined, and at the time of this report, no new projects were planned. However, an analysis of rental and ownership trends shows that there is latent unmet demand in the City and in Wards Corner.

There are several reasons for this optimistic look at the rental housing market. The first reason relates to an analysis of vacancy rates. Overall vacancy rates in rental units in the City were only 3.4 percent in 2002, down from 4.0 percent the previous year. Further, in apartment units in the Wards Corner area, the vacancy rates were much lower at only 1.8 percent. Generally vacancy rates of five percent represent equilibrium in the apartment market (SSR Realty Advisors). Another important finding from an analysis of existing Norfolk apartments is that in the face of the low vacancy rates, rental rates continue to increase. Citywide, rental rates increased $14.00 per unit over last year. In the Wards Corner area, the rental increases were even greater. Rents in one-bedroom units increased by $39 over the last year from $495 to $534. Likewise, rents in two bedroom units increased by $46 per unit, rising from an average of $581 to $627. This strong increase in rent of eight percent in the face of extremely low vacancy rates suggests a significant unmet demand for apartments in the Wards Corner market.

Potential Apartment Market Demand

Applying a similar methodology as that used above for ownership housing, we have calculated the universe of potential market-rate apartment renters. We have also investigated the possibility of luxury apartments in the Wards Corner area. Both analyses are found below.

Market-Rate Rental Housing

Market-rate rental housing, based on the existing units offered in the area, suggests rents in the $470 to $585 range for one-bedroom units and rents in the $550 to $680 range for two-bedroom units. Based on national averages of 30 percent of household income spent on housing (less 5% for utilities), we have estimated the required income for this range of housing. To afford rents in the range given above, ($470-$680), minimum household incomes of $22,500 to $32,640 would be required. Based on 2002 estimates, there are currently 267 households who currently live in the area in that income range. As of last year, there were approximately 56 units vacant in apartment buildings in the greater Wards Corner area. Thus there exists and unmet demand for 211 comparable market-rate units based upon existing resident demand.

Inflow Demand

If a new market-rate project is added to the market, it will likely attract households from outside the primary housing trade area. Based on the fact that few, if any, new apartment complexes have been built in Norfolk in recent years and coupled with the new Wal-Mart/Mid-box potential, this inflow should be significant. We are thus assuming an in-flow rate of 20 percent for an additional 42 units per year. The total potential demand for market-rate apartments is 253 units.

High Amenity/Luxury Rental Housing

An analysis of the Norfolk luxury apartment market shows that the average two-bedroom unit has approximately 1,168 square feet and rents for $1,150 per month. Based on construction cost estimates for a high amenity building, similar rents would be required for development in Wards Corner. As per national averages discussed above, the annual household income threshold for luxury apartments given this rent level is $46,000. Currently in the City of Norfolk there are approximately 9,726 households who rent and have sufficient incomes to qualify for this level of housing. Households already in luxury units are removed from this total to yield a net "universe" of 8,344 households. Based on the Census,

approximately 10 percent of the apartments in the Norfolk market roll over each year. Assuming that the rollover in luxury units is lower than the average, we have estimated that there will be approximately 626 households in the market for luxury units in a given year. Finally, it is reasonable to expect that a new luxury apartment complex would at least be able to capture an equal share of the market with respect to the competition. Therefore the new project would likely capture 12.5 percent of the active market, or approximately 75 units per year.

Conclusion

From the analysis above we can conclude that there is demand for both market-rate ownership units, particularly single-family dwellings, as well as market-rate and even luxury apartments. The ownership market will continue to exist in the below market-rate dwellings, but no attempt should be made to add additional units of this type to the market. As the overall market gains strength, it is likely that these below market units will be replaced at market rate. The apartment market, while trending slow over the last year, shows promise in the future. With strong employment centers in the Navy base and elsewhere in the region, the strong demand for rental units will only get stronger. The luxury apartment opportunity is one that will likely be met once the retail offerings have been upgraded and the social issues and perception of crime have been reduced or eliminated.

WARDS CORNER RETAIL MARKET ANALYSIS

Our analysis of the market support for additional retail goods and services in the Wards Corner area begins with a brief discussion of national trends in retailing, followed immediately by an overview of the Norfolk and Tidewater area retail strengths. The market forecast analysis then follows, beginning with a description of the retail trade area and the demographic trends within that area. Based on the demographic analysis, overall expenditure potential figures are calculated. Next, existing retail space in the trade area is identified. Finally, the amount of retail demand in terms of additional supportable square feet is calculated. Based on the competition factors, development constraints and demographic trends, potential retail niche markets are identified.

National Trends in Retailing

There have been important changes in retailing technology over the last decade which directly affect the Wards Corner shopping area located at Granby Street and Little Creek Road. The first significant trend is the move away from organized "single rooftop" shopping malls anchored by department stores. This was the original format of the Wards Corner Shopping Center, although it was built before the shopping mall concept had fully evolved and is somewhere between what today would be called a strip mall and a shopping center. The second important trend is the rise in popularity of big-box stores such as Wal-Mart and Kmart super centers. One of the key success factors with these "category-killer" retailers is their expansive national distribution networks and the ability that gives them to offer the same goods as smaller stores but at lower prices.

Another key trend, and one that may factor in positively to Wards Corner's future, is with respect to "mid-box" retailers. Mid-box retailers are stand-alone retail locations, generally specializing in a particular type of goods, such as clothing or electronics. The importance to Wards Corner is the overwhelming success these retailers have when locating in proximity to large discount super centers. With a Big-K location on the east edge of the trade area at Southern Shopping Center, and the announcement of a new Wal-Mart SuperStore close by the greater Wards Corner area meets this most important locational criterion.

A final trend in retailing, and one very much a result of the growth of big box centers, is the fate of existing strip malls. All across the country strip malls that were once popular and successful, built in the 1950's and 1960's and successful through to the late 1980's, are finding themselves losing to overwhelming competition. Because of the low cost structure of big box retailers, plentiful parking and proximity to other large retailers, small store owners in antiquated strip malls are going out of business in droves. Thus the older strip malls are being forced to reprogram their space in an attempt to offer diversified goods not available at the bigger retailers. As is discussed later in the Competition section, this presents a serious, and immediate, problem for existing Wards Corner retail locations.

Norfolk and the Metropolitan Area Retail Strength

Although the national trends discussed above do not favor the existing retail environment at Granby Street and Little Creek Road, there is certainly good news to be told as well. The greater Norfolk-Virginia Beach Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) ranks in the top 15 percent of all

LEGEND

- Highway
- Main Roads
- Connecting Corridors
- Main Urban Centers
- Study Area

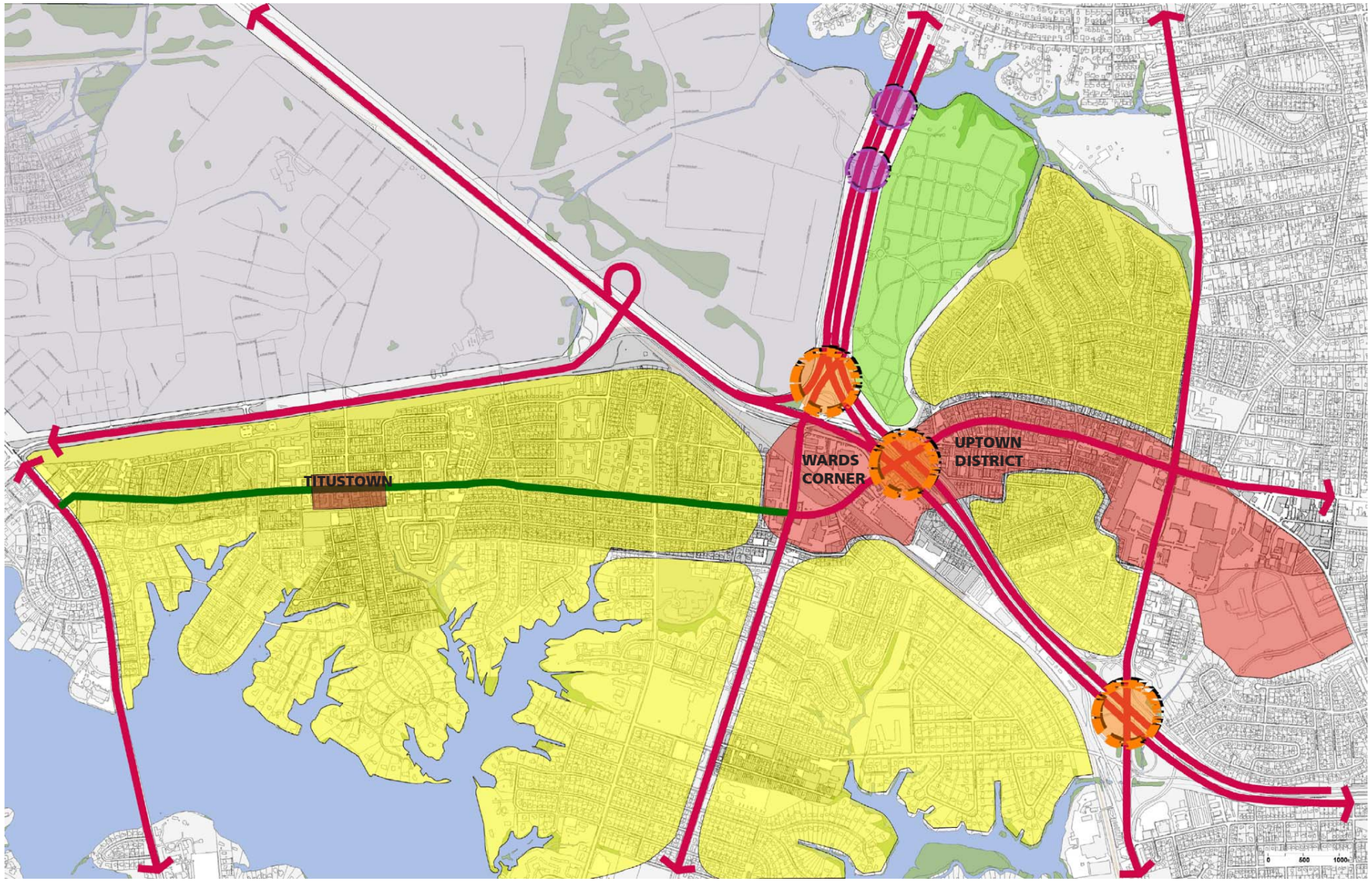
323 U.S. markets in terms of total retail sales and Effective Buying Income. The region also ranks in the top 15 percent in the sub-categories of food and beverage sales, clothing and accessories, and general merchandise sales. What this means to Norfolk, and the Wards Corner area, is that this region is "on the map" in terms of attracting national retailers. Quite often the location of a national retailer can make the difference between success and failure of a new retail center.

Uptown Concept

There are currently two major nodes of retail activity in the City, downtown Norfolk with the MacArthur Center and JANAF/Military Circle Mall. We believe that, if you look past the traditional shopping location at Wards Corner to a somewhat larger area, there is a clear opportunity to create a third major retail node in the city.

Although Uptown is not a description with currency in Norfolk today, we believe that the district we describe is comparable to areas in other communities which are called uptown districts. These are commonly the location of earlier residential suburbs supported by streetcars and then the automobile, and were the sites of the first branch locations of downtown stores.

Defining the Uptown District as extending from Granby and Little Creek eastward to the new Wal-Mart and Norfolk's new business park beyond, this third retail node completes a triangle that offers nearly 100 percent coverage over the city. For the purposes of this retail analysis, we have analyzed the potential for future retail sales based on the Uptown District concept and likewise have delineated a trade area large enough to support regional retail offerings as opposed to the existing mix of neighborhood-serving retail.



LEGEND

- I-64
- Main Roads
- Little Creek Road
- Highway Interchange
- Highway Interchange
- Forest Lawn Cemetery

The map on this page highlights this area along with a 3.5-mile ring that represents the opportunity to attract larger retailers. This opportunity is discussed in greater detail at the end of this section.

Retail Market Analysis Methodology

There are a number of important variables that must be considered in determining the retail market potential for Wards Corner. These variables include population base, household and household income trends, existing competition from other shopping locations, current spending trends, achievable capture rates and inflow sales. Definitions of the variables used in the methodology to determine market potential, are described in the paragraphs which follow.

Expenditure Potential

The total expenditure potential of an area is the total amount of income available to be spent on goods and services. This figure is calculated by multiplying average household income by the total number of households. Actual retail sales figures for Norfolk are then applied to this figure to break out the potential by various retail sales categories.

In-Flow Sales

Inflow sales are defined as those sales that come from outside the retail trade area. In addition to the expenditure potential that the study area can capture from its defined retail trade area, inflow sales from neighboring areas must also be accounted for to correctly reflect the market. As with capture rates described above, the inflow percentage is derived from demographics and related shopping characteristics and our knowledge of the neighborhoods and characteristics therein.

Supportable Square Feet

Supportable square feet is the amount of square feet of retail space that can be economically supported by the expenditure potential of a given neighborhood area. We calculate this by dividing Captured Expenditure Potential by the Average Sales per Square Foot, taken from *Dollars and Cents of Shopping Centers*, a national publication that tracks shopping center sales. It is this calculation that is critical in the analysis of the commercial viability of the area and the recommendations that follow.

Uptown Retail Trade Area

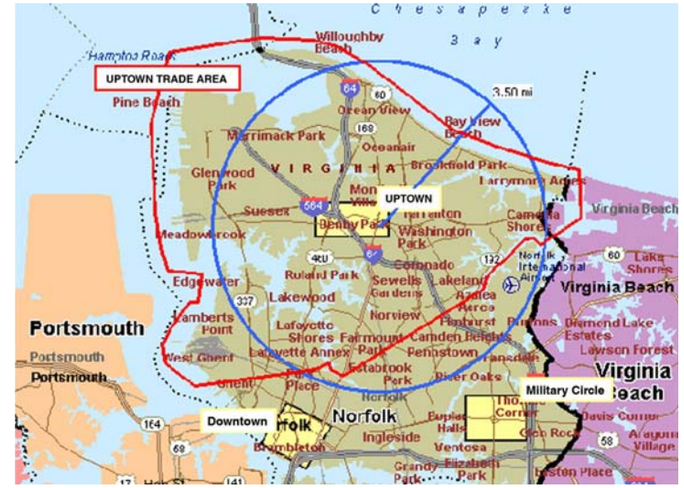
The map at right shows the Uptown Trade Area (UTA), indicated by the red line, along with a 3.5-mile ring. Through an analysis of site locations of Wal-mart Supercenters and accompanying mid-box retail, it was determined that the average market area for these co-locations is 3.5 miles. The UTA is somewhat larger than this radius (shown by the blue circle) because of the natural barrier of the water to the north.

Uptown District Retail Trade Area Demographics

The population in the Uptown District for 2004 was estimated to be 157,314, down only 275 from the 2000 census. Households in the area rose by nearly 700, increasing to 58,220 over the same period. The table below highlights these results as well as household income trends.

Competitive Shopping Locations

There are eight competitive shopping centers in the Wards Corner area that will provide competition to any new shopping center development. These centers account for a total of nearly 812,000 square feet, not including grocery stores. There are a number of smaller



Uptown District Trade Area

TABLE 1. UPTOWN TRADE AREA DEMOGRAPHIC TRENDS			
Demographic Variable	2000	2004	2009
Population	157,589	157,314	156,566
Households	57,521	58,220	59,273
Average Household Income	$44,545	$49,074	$54,741

Sources: Claritas, Inc., 2004

strip shopping centers to the north of the Uptown District as well. Because of their location, and goods offered, are not thought to provide significant competition to the Uptown District retailers. Their competition factor is covered in greater detail below in the discussion on capture rates.

The map at right shows the existing shopping centers in the Uptown Trade Area. The neighborhood centers, indicated on the map with light blue squares, are small centers, generally 50,000 SF or below, offering primarily convenience goods and small food stores. Community centers, indicated in yellow, often have a larger grocery store and a modest variety of shoppers goods and personal service companies.

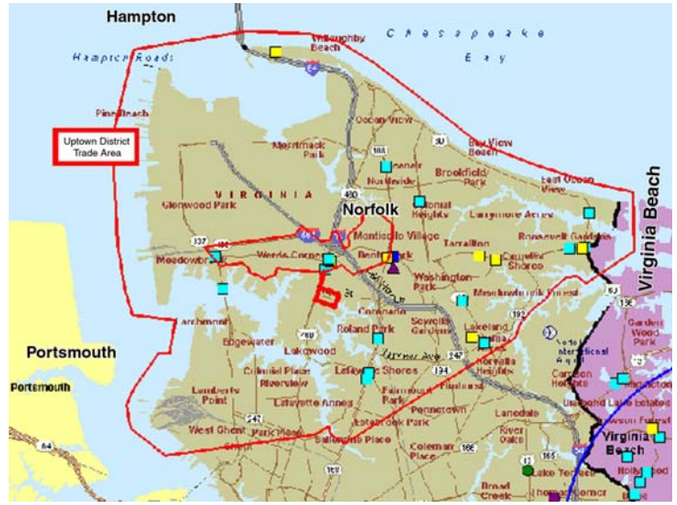
TABLE 2. EXISTING TRADE AREA SHOPPING CENTERS

Shopping Center	Retail SF
Hampton Boulevard Plaza	20,000
Meadowbrook Shopping Center	30,000
Wards Corner Shoppes	14,757
Wards Corner	61,450
Midtown Shopping Center	86,759
Wards Corner Mall	121,585
Southern Shopping Center	214,989
Tidewater Shopping Center	262,000
Wal-Mart Super Center	210,000
Total Existing and Square Feet	1,021,540

Source: Shopping Center Directory and HSGA Field Survey

Projected Retail Expenditure Potential

Total retail expenditure potential is the total amount of a household's income that will be spent on retail goods in a given year. The first step in the determination of total expenditure potential is to estimate Total Household Income (THI) for the Trade Area. This is calculated by multiplying the total number of households in the trade area by the average household income. This calculation



Existing Trade Area Shopping Centers

yields the Total Household Income for the area. Based on the demographic analysis presented above, it is estimated that THI for the Uptown Trade Area is $2.857 billion.

The next step is to calculate the average amount that a Norfolk household is likely to spend on retail goods. Based on Virginia state retail tax records for the City of Norfolk, we have estimated the percentages of THI on specific retail categories. The table below highlights these calculations. Total Uptown Trade Area expenditure potential for the retail goods in the table above is approximately $1.034 billion.

Estimate Market Capture

The next step in the analysis is to estimate the amount of the expenditure potential calculated above that can be "captured" by shopping locations in the Uptown District.

TABLE 3. PERCENT OF HOUSEHOLD SPENDING ON SELECT RETAIL GOODS

Retail Category	Percent of THI
Apparel	4.45%
Automotive (retail related not including dealers)	1.09%
Furniture, Home Furnishings and Equipment	3.88%
General Merchandise	7.45%
Lumber, Building Materials and Supplies	8.38%
Machinery, Equipment and Supplies (non-commercial)	0.93%
Miscellaneous/Other	10.03%
Total Percent Spending on Retail Goods	**36.20%**

Source: Virginia Department of Taxation, US Census, Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2002

In determining the capture rate we look at existing competition, distance to similar shopping locations, overall size of the market and probable market draw. Based on it's location in the north of Norfolk along with the water barrier and excellent interstate access, we estimate that the shopping locations in table 2 should be able to capture 50 percent of the areas expenditure potential. Of the remaining 50 percent, other shopping centers in the area not in the table will capture a portion and yet more expenditures will leave the area for other shopping centers.

Supportable Square Feet

The final step in the analysis is to calculate the total supportable square feet and the amount that can be added to the marketplace. In order to convert total expenditure potential to supportable square feet, we have used the average sales per square foot for regional shopping centers as a measure. According to *Dollars and Cents of Shopping Centers*, the average sales per square foot for regional shopping centers is $225. As discussed above, based on a reasonable capture of 50

percent capture of potential expenditure potential above, the Uptown District can support a total of 1,517,000 square feet of these selected retail categories.

The net additional supportable square feet is thus calculated by subtracting the existing retail space from the total potential supportable. From the competition analysis above, we identified approximately 1,022,000 square feet of existing retail space. This figure includes the planned Wal-mart Supercenter. Therefore there is support for an additional 316,000 square feet of retail space in the Uptown District. Note: this figure includes a vacancy rate of three percent.

Based on experience in other locations, we would expect that some of the 214,000 square feet in the Southern Shopping Center would change hands due to competition from Wal-Mart and that there would be the potential for additional retail space in the right market niches. Reprogramming of the center would likely be driven by the market forces created by the high level of competition expected from the discount retailer. We would expect the smaller stores in the Southern Shopping Center selling those products that the large discounter excels at with lower prices, would likely relocate to strip malls in the study area or elsewhere in the city. Store types that compliment the competition or offer products of a higher quality than the discounter would likely fill the space.

Potential Niche Target Markets

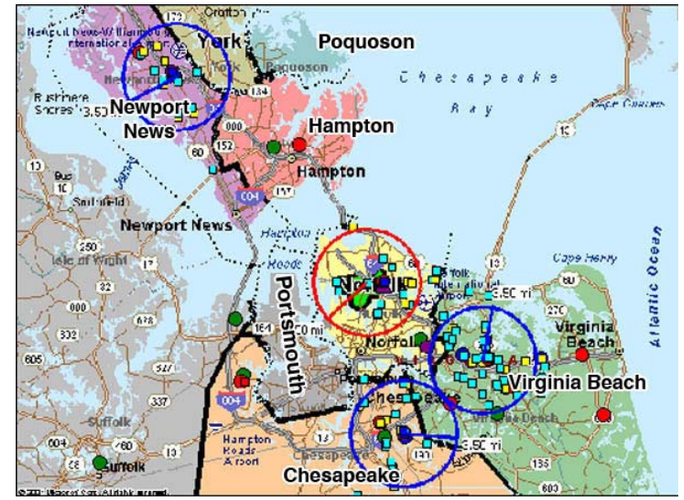
Based upon total expenditure potential, profile of the neighborhood, and an analysis of the competition, we have sought to identify potential markets for the Uptown District. From our analysis it is clear that the upper end of the market, including major malls with department stores, is well served by both the MacArthur Center and several stores in the JANAF and Military Circle Malls, in addition to regional malls in Virginia Beach and Newport News. Likewise, the discount end of the market will be well served by the new Wal-Mart store, the two Kmarts in close proximity, and the locations of Dollar Tree and Dollar Stores. We would expect some reductions in square footage of competing discount stores once the new discount department store opens.

After an analysis of major shopping nodes in Norfolk, Newport News, Virginia Beach and Chesapeake, a clear opportunity emerged. The mid-box retail center offering is not fully being met in the City of Norfolk at this time. The map on page 18 shows the locational trends of these retailers, (Best Buy, Old Navy, PETsMART), in the Tidewater area.

As the map at right shows, each of these retail nodes has a trade area of roughly 3.5 miles. The red circle also shows that Norfolk, while having more than sufficient total household income, does not currently have a similar center. A brief review of the total household expenditure potential of this ring versus the competitive rings shows a similar household income level. Thus the findings that this type of retail location would also be successful in the Uptown District.

Conclusion

Our analysis has shown that there is a significant amount of available household expenditure from Uptown District residents to support a regional shopping district. Much of this expenditure potential is currently leaving the area due to a lack of competitive product. Given the right mix of retail offerings, we believe that the Wards Corner/ Uptown District can and should recapture these lost sales. Based on our findings there is support for an



Major Shopping Nodes in the Tidewater Region

additional 316,000 square feet of retail space in market categories not currently served. The successful operation of the new discount department store will have a major impact on the achievement of the potential. This forecast also assumes that development sites in proximity to the new Wal-Mart are programmed for a complementary mix of mid-box retailers. There are a number of other factors that will play an important role in achieving this forecast, including the improvement of streetscapes, removal of crime and other negative social elements, and aggressive planning and implementation by the City.

LEGEND

- Third Crossing
- Light Rail
- Highway
- Main Roads
- Connecting Corridors
- Main Urban Centers
- Study Area

Transportation

Transportation is an integral component of any good comprehensive plan. Kimley-Horn Associates believe that the transportation study must not only make the most of the existing transportation system, but also identify key improvements to accommodate future growth and redevelopment opportunities. These improvements cannot relate to vehicles alone, but must also consider transit, pedestrians, and bicyclists. Throughout the study area, the transportation network is constrained by existing development. In areas where redevelopment is planned to occur, it will be important to identify where land needs to be reserved to provide for a future multi-modal transportation system.

Within the study area three specific redevelopment areas were identified and include:

- Wards Corner—around the Little Creek Road/Granby Street intersection
- Texas Streets area—eastern edge of the study area, bounded by Little Creek Road on the north
- Titustown—located west of the Little Creek Road/ Diven Street intersection

These areas, linked to one another by Little Creek Road, were the initially identified focal points for redevelopment within the greater Wards Corner area. The importance of Little Creek Road in the city's transportation network today warrants extra attention, as future plans are identified and improvements recommended.

Existing Conditions

The study area for the plan encompasses an area that includes several of the city's most important transportation corridors—Hampton Boulevard, Granby Street, Tidewater Drive, Terminal Boulevard, and Little Creek Road. Hampton Boulevard forms the western edge of the study area and provides mobility between downtown and the study area, offers a connection to the Mid-Town Tunnel to Portsmouth, and serves as a front door for Norfolk International Terminals and Naval Station Norfolk. Terminal Boulevard forms the northern edge of the study area, primarily serving the Norfolk International Terminal and Naval Station Norfolk as well as providing a direct connection to I-564. Little Creek Road, Granby Street, and Tidewater Drive are key framework streets for the study area, providing for mobility within and through the study area and also access to development. Following is a brief description of each of the aforementioned corridors within the study area:

- **Little Creek Road** is a six-lane median divided roadway between Tidewater Drive and I-64. West of I-64 it transitions to a primarily commercial five-lane cross section with very little access control (frequent driveways) and maintains this cross section through Granby Street. West of Granby Street to its terminus at Hampton Boulevard, Little Creek Road transitions to a residential character four-lane undivided cross section. Average daily traffic (ADT) volume estimates maintained by the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) in 2002 indicated a range of 18,000 vehicles per day [vpd] (west of Diven Street) to 32,000 vpd (in the vicinity of I-64).
- **Granby Street** is a six-lane median divided roadway throughout the study area. South of Little Creek Road, Granby Street has a wide landscaped median. North on Granby Street, the median narrows approaching the four-lane cross section transition at the I-64 interchange. In 2002, the section of Granby Street within the study area carried between 25,000 vpd (north of Little Creek Road) and 30,000 vpd (south of Little Creek Road).
- **Tidewater Drive** has a varying cross section throughout the city, but within the study area it is primarily a four-lane divided facility with a grade separation at Little Creek Road. At this location, Little Creek Road bridges over Tidewater Drive and ramps are provided for access to Little Creek Road. In 2002, VDOT reported between 27,000 vpd (south of Little Creek Road) and 17,000 vpd (north of Little Creek Road) on Tidewater Drive.
- **Hampton Boulevard** is a six-lane median divided roadway throughout the study area. This corridor provides connectivity between Norfolk International Terminals and Naval Station Norfolk and downtown Norfolk and the Mid-Town Tunnel. In 2002, the section of Hampton Boulevard between Terminal Boulevard and Little Creek Road carried approximately 36,000 vpd.
- **Terminal Boulevard** is a four-lane median divided roadway with signalized and unsignalized intersections. The heaviest volumes of traffic along this corridor are experienced during peak hours and during shift changes for the Norfolk International Terminal and Naval Station Norfolk. In 2002, between Hampton Boulevard and I-564, VDOT reported an ADT of 26,000 vpd.

General Traffic Conditions

During peak hours, traffic conditions throughout the study area are busy with congestion at key intersections and steady mid-block traffic flow. Locations where stop-and-go traffic conditions are prevalent include:

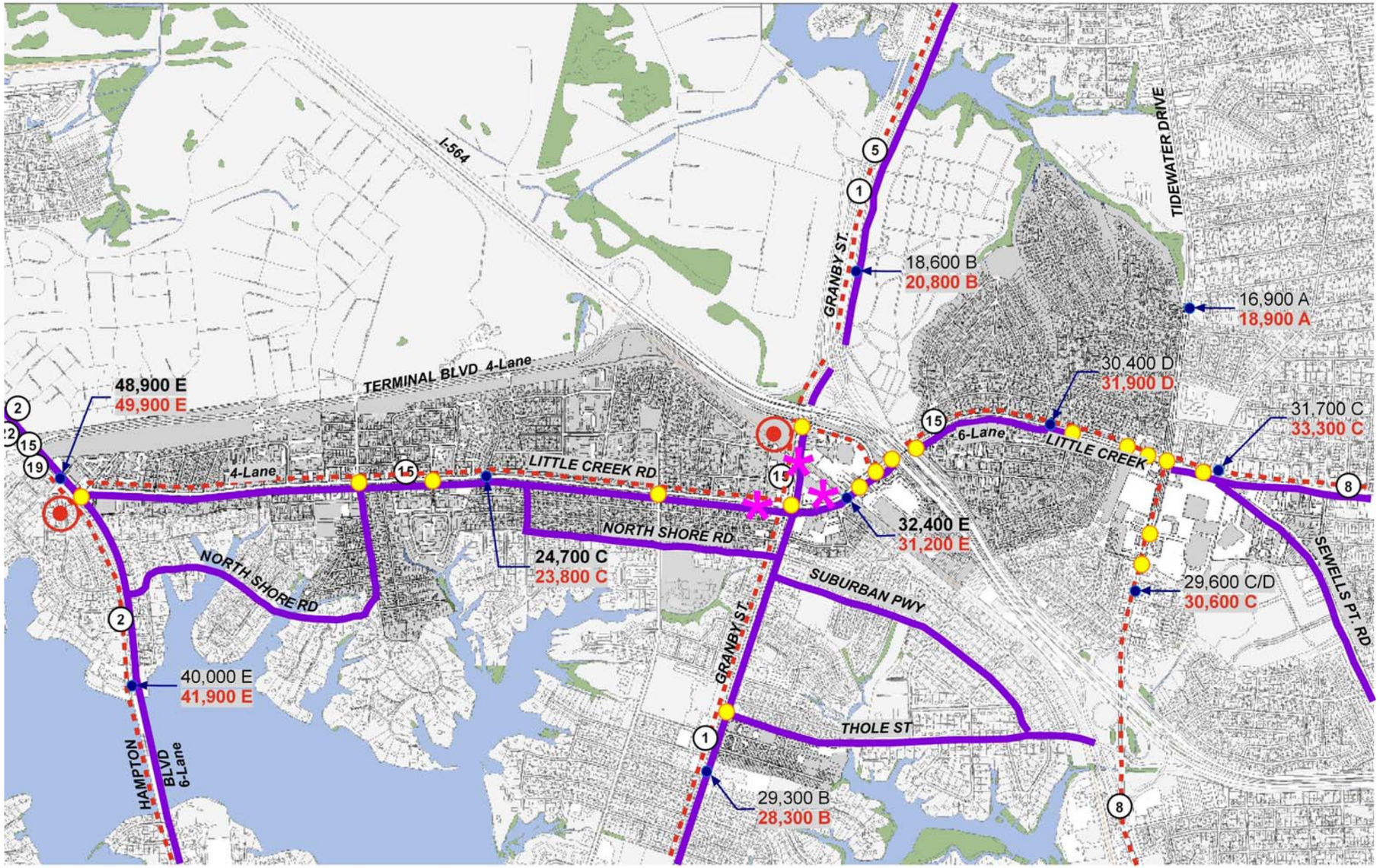
- Little Creek Road/Granby Street signalized intersection
- Little Creek Road from Granby Street through I-64
- Little Creek Road from Van Patten Road through Tidewater Drive

The visual clutter of development and utilities; minimal spacing of traffic signals; and frequent driveways and side streets contribute to the difficulty of moving traffic efficiently along sections of Little Creek Road and Granby Street. This problem is most visible in the vicinity of Wards Corner, near I-64, and approaching Tidewater Drive.

Traffic Control

As it relates to study area transportation corridors where redevelopment potential has been identified, Granby Street and Little Creek Road have become the primary focus points. Along each of these corridors are a number of traffic signals located at the following:

1. Little Creek Road/Tidewater Drive
2. Little Creek Road/Shopping Center Entrance
3. Little Creek Road/Van Patten Road
4. Little Creek Road/Simons Drive/Dallas Street
5. Little Creek Road/I-64 westbound ramps
6. Little Creek Road/I-64 eastbound ramps



LEGEND

XX 1990 ADT (Average Daily Traffic)-LOS (Level of Service)

XX 2020 ADT/LOS

Bus Route #

Bus Transfer Locations

Planned Bike Routes

Signalized Intersection

Pedestrian Signal

7. Little Creek Road/Admiral Taussig Boulevard
8. Little Creek Road/Kroger/Farm Fresh Entrance
9. Little Creek Road/Pedestrian Crossing (pedestrian signal)
10. Little Creek Road/Granby Street
11. Little Creek Road/Newport Avenue
12. Little Creek Road/Ruthven Road (planned to be installed mid 2004)
13. Little Creek Road/Armfield Avenue
14. Little Creek Road/Diven Street
15. Little Creek Road/Hampton Boulevard
16. Granby Street/I-64 eastbound ramps
17. Granby Street/Pedestrian Crossing
18. Granby Street/Thole Street

Driveways and Access

Along Granby Street, the character of development and the scale at which it exists has influenced the type of access that has been created along the corridor. While there are numerous individual driveways and public streets, most of these are lightly used or spaced such that they have only a minimal impact on overall flow characteristics on Granby Street. Approaching Wards Corner from the north or the south, driveways become more frequent, increasing the frequency with which the flow of traffic is interrupted.

Along Little Creek Road west of Granby Street, the majority of driveways and public streets—with the exception of Diven Street—have minimal traffic volumes and impacts on the overall flow of Little Creek Road; however, when vehicles are stopped to turn left from Little Creek Road, the existing four-lane undivided cross section does not provide for separate storage of left-turning vehicles. At these locations, blockages occur and the effective carrying capacity of Little Creek Road is reduced from four lanes to two lanes. As Little Creek Road approaches Granby Street, driveway frequency and volume increases. This results in vehicles being stopped in through travel lanes more often, creating blockages and reducing overall roadway capacity.

Similarly, the section of Little Creek Road between Granby Street and I-64 has numerous driveway access locations that contribute to a reduction in the capacity of the street. Adding to excessive access problems, five traffic signals are located in the 1,200-foot section of Little Creek Road between Granby Street and I-64. Between I-64 and Van Patten Road, Little Creek Road changes character and adds a raised (in some sections landscaped) median, which helps to minimize the number of left-turn conflicts along the corridor.

Railroad Conflicts

In addition to numerous other competing conflicts along Little Creek Road and Granby Street, the heavily used Norfolk-Southern railroad corridor that extends from Norfolk International Terminals (NIT) and crosses Little Creek Road and Granby Street at-grade creates complication in the movement of traffic within the study area. From recent surveys, it is understood that approximately 6 trains per day (3 inbound, 3 outbound) cross Granby Street and Little Creek Road at Wards Corner. From observation, the following was noted:

- Inbound trains (to the port) take less time to clear at-grade crossings—8 to 10 minutes per train movement
- Outbound trains (from the port) take more time to clear at-grade crossings—10 to 15 minutes per train movement

From conversations with the Virginia Port Authority (VPA), it was noted that an informal agreement exists to limit train movements through the Wards Corner area during peak periods. The VPA also noted that as port traffic increases and the corresponding freight movement demand increases, trains will lengthen and travel with greater regularity along the railroad corridor. As it relates to traffic traveling along Granby Street and Little Creek Road, this will translate to more frequent blockages and longer periods of time for each blockage.

Pedestrian and Bicycle Accommodation

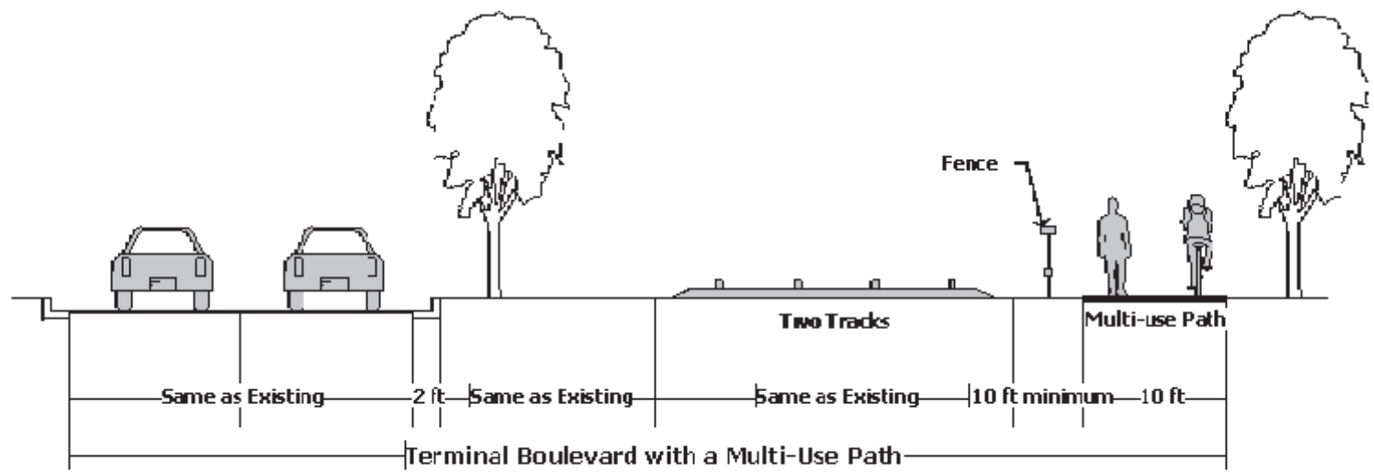
Similar to many older communities, sidewalks in the Wards Corner area were constructed well-before Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) standards were developed and adopted universally. Many of the study area streets already have sidewalks, but others do not. Where there are sidewalks, many will need to be retrofitted to provide ADA compliant curb ramp—a task which the City of Norfolk Public Works has already started, but recognizes is a lengthy undertaking.

Throughout the city and within the Wards Corner area, the major thoroughfare and roadway network is well-

established. Within the study area, specifically designated bicycle facilities do not exist, although bicyclists are not prohibited from cycling on public streets or sidewalks. The 1992 General Plan for the City of Norfolk indicates a bicycle plan for the city that shows future bicycle routes being designated and constructed within the study area. Specifically, these will be located on Granby Street, Little Creek Road, and Hampton Boulevard as well as on several neighborhood streets within the area. The plan recommends that these projects not be undertaken independently, but be included when roadway improvements are made for these corridors.

This plan supports the *General Plan of Norfolk* recommendation that bicycle-related improvements to major roads such as Granby Street and Little Creek Road do not occur independently of other roadway improvement projects. Planning ahead, in areas where redevelopment is proposed, an additional 2 feet of right-of-way should be reserved to provide for future shared lane bicycle facilities. In sections where suitable parallel routes are available, bicyclists should be made aware (through appropriate signage) that alternate routes exist—such as along Little Creek Road in the Texas Streets area where Fort Worth Avenue parallels Little Creek Road.

The continuous railroad corridor between Hampton Boulevard and Wards Corner offers the opportunity to further explore the potential of developing a multi-use path for pedestrians and bicyclists along the railroad right-of-way. Typically multi-use paths of this type are 10-foot wide asphalt paths with or without a centerline stripe. In most cases where these paths run along active railroads, a physical barrier is required for safety. These barriers are typically walls or fences. Although the railroad runs continuously to Hampton Boulevard, railroad expansion plans and planned modifications to the Hampton Boulevard/Terminal Boulevard intersection will limit the amount of available right-of-way for bicycle-related improvements along Terminal Boulevard west of Diven Street. Understanding these limitations, a multi-use path beginning at Diven Street and running to the east of along Terminal Boulevard has a greater potential for successful implementation. Further supporting this route, the long-range bike plan for the city indicates a bike route connection along Diven Street, crossing to the south of Little Creek Road. The potential multi-use path along Terminal Boulevard would be constructed within the Virginia Power easement on an alignment that would be developed through stakeholder coordination. A path along this corridor would be relatively uninterrupted by intersecting driveways and streets; however, the location of the path behind the backyards of the neighborhood would put it out of the view of residents. Prior to constructing this pathway, impacts should be identified by city staff, area residents, and other potential stakeholders.



Illustrative Cross Section of Terminal Boulevard with a Multi-Use Path along One Side

Transit

Hampton Roads Transit (HRT) provides regularly scheduled transit services throughout the Hampton Roads metropolitan area through a number of means. Within the study area, fixed-route transit services include the following routes:

- Route 1—Downtown Norfolk/Pembroke East
- Route 2—Naval Station Norfolk/Hampton Boulevard
- Route 5—Wards Corner/Willoughby
- Route 8—Downtown Norfolk/Little Creek Amphibious Base
- Route 15—Naval Station Norfolk/Robert Hall Boulevard
- Route 19—Naval Station Norfolk/Silverleaf
- Route 22—Naval Station Norfolk/Greenbrier/Indian River Park-and-Ride Lot

Transit-related waiting passenger amenities within the study area are minimal with the exception of the transfer facility that HRT has located in the southwest quadrant of the Granby Street/I-64 ramps intersection. The transfer station includes a median crossover location on Granby Street as well as signal actuation to facilitate the efficient movement of transit vehicles into and out of the facility.

Light Rail

In January 2003, the Supplemental Draft Environmental Impact Statement for the Norfolk Light Rail Transit Project was completed for an 8-mile section of the project extending from Eastern Virginia Medical School (EVMS) to Newtown Road in Norfolk. No rail extensions to the Wards Corner area are planned as a part of this project at this time; however, a long-term extension of rail transit to Naval Station Norfolk through the Wards Corner area is not precluded.

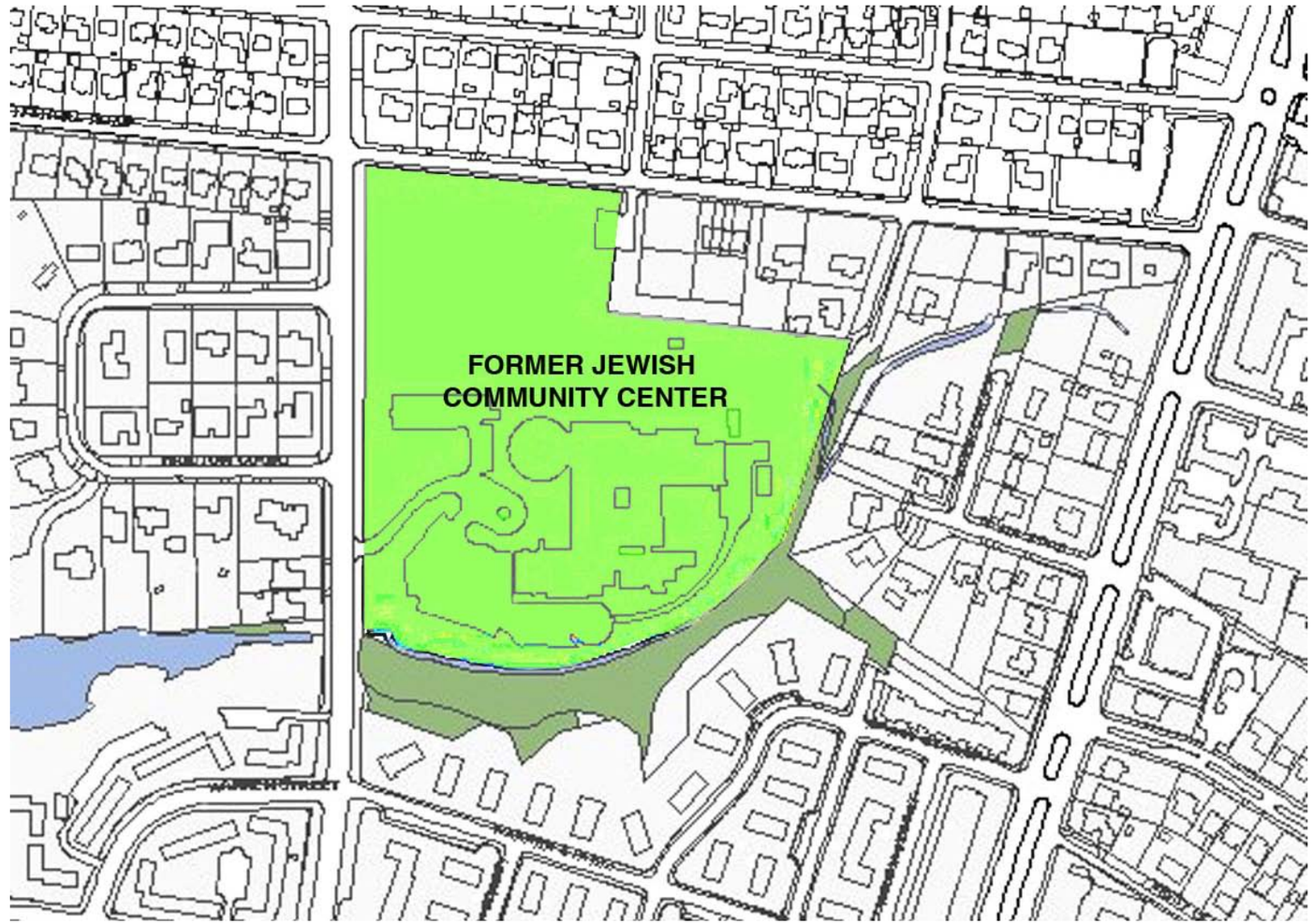
Existing HRT Fixed-Route Services in the Wards Corner Area
Source: Hampton Roads Transit

Recreational Resources

While single family houses in the Greater Wards Corner Area obviously have their own yards, and the garden apartment complexes have landscaped open space, there are not many outdoor or indoor recreational resources in the area, other than school playgrounds, Northside Park at the edge of the study area on Tidewater Drive and the new Titustown Recreation Center. A small park of approximately 5 acres is located at the north end of the Monticello Village neighborhood that primarily serves the adjacent community. The park includes a baseball field that is also used for football and soccer practices, a basketball court, and a playground with swings and climbing apparatus.

The Jewish Community Center of South Hampton Roads is moving from 7300 Newport Avenue, just west of Granby Street within the Greater Wards Corner study area, to Virginia Beach. The property was put up for sale. The land is currently zoned institutional. Its playing fields and buildings constitute a major recreational resource for the Greater Wards Corner area.

During the planning study we were asked to look at a number of alternative development concepts for the Jewish Community Center site, including a proposal to rezone the property to permit mid-rise residential development. Our reaction is that the Wards Corner location at Granby Street and Little Creek Road is a more appropriate location for mid-rise residential, and we did not think it was a good idea to compete with that possibility. Another potential alternative was to rezone the site for large-lot, single-family residential development. Although that would be more suitable for the development of the area than multi-family housing, our recommendation has been that the Jewish Community Center should continue to be zoned for institutional development, and that some way be found to preserve and enhance the value of the site for recreational use. As our study concludes, we are pleased to learn that the City of Norfolk has decided to purchase the Jewish Community Center property.



Planning and Urban Design Proposals

We have identified three critical areas for the future of the Greater Wards Corner Area:

1. The Texas Streets portion of Denby Park and related areas extending along East Little Creek Road to the Southern Shopping Center,
2. The two larger Wards Corner shopping centers on the east side of Granby at Little Creek, and
3. The Titustown retail district, particularly the block on both sides of West Little Creek Road just west of Diven Street.

If these three areas can be replanned and redesigned as proposed in this report, we believe that many of the negative pressures on the Greater Wards Corner Area will be reversed.

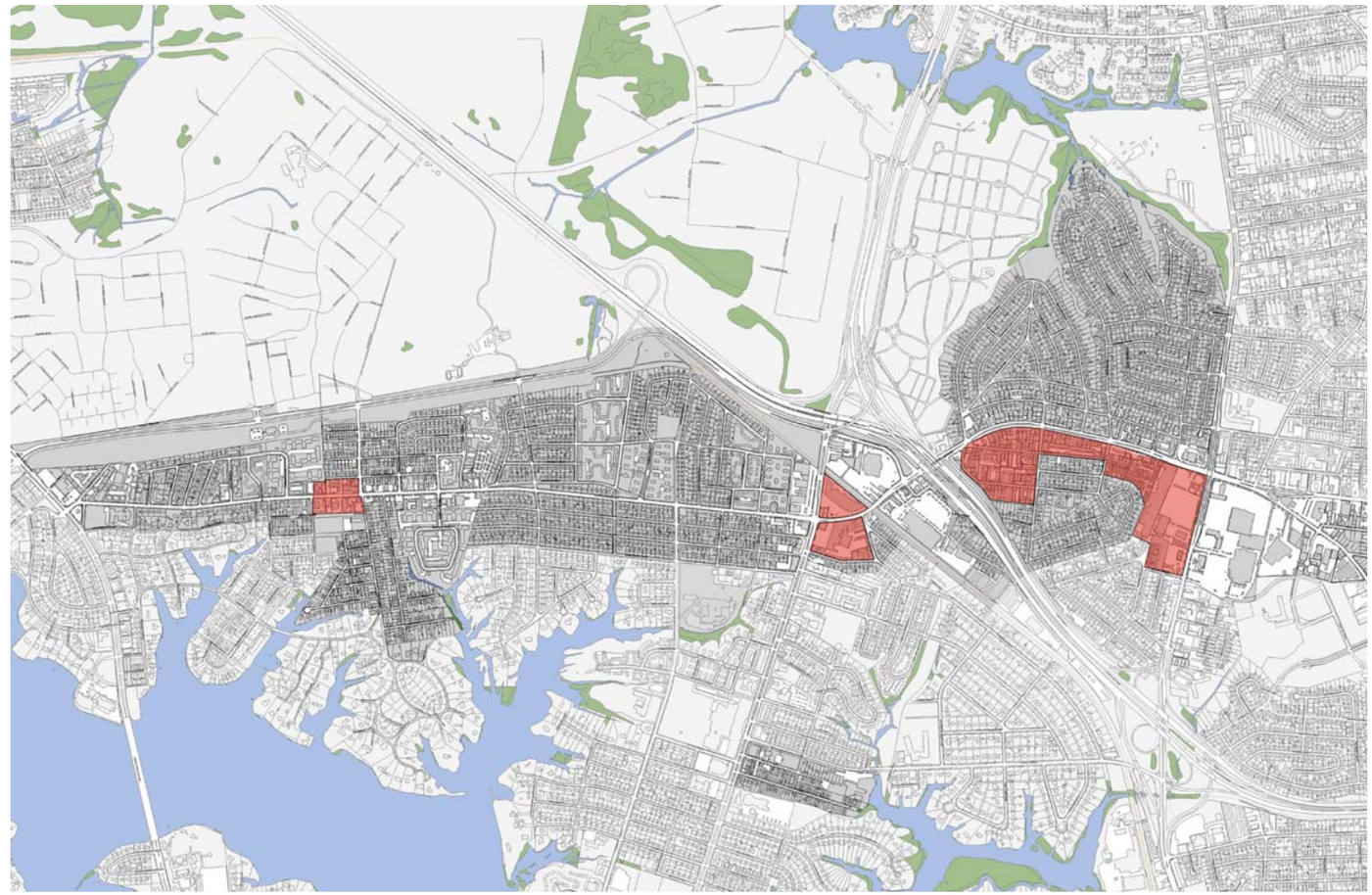
Of the three, the proposals for the Texas Streets are by far the most important. The concentration of criminal activity in this area, and the difficulty in controlling it, argue for the need for major change.

The owners of the two major shopping centers at Wards Corner are apparently unwilling to make major changes at this time. These properties would be extremely difficult to improve for retail use in any case, as they are both too small to accommodate the necessary parking for a significant amount of new retailing. Our suggestion is that owners consider a change to a primarily residential development with neighborhood stores on the ground floor; and that the City of Norfolk make zoning changes and take other measures to facilitate this change when the owners are ready to take action.

The problems at Titustown reproduce in miniature some of the problems at the Texas Streets, and the existing retail district could be strengthened. The changes we suggest could have a strong positive impact on the surrounding residential neighborhoods.

LEGEND

Critical Areas



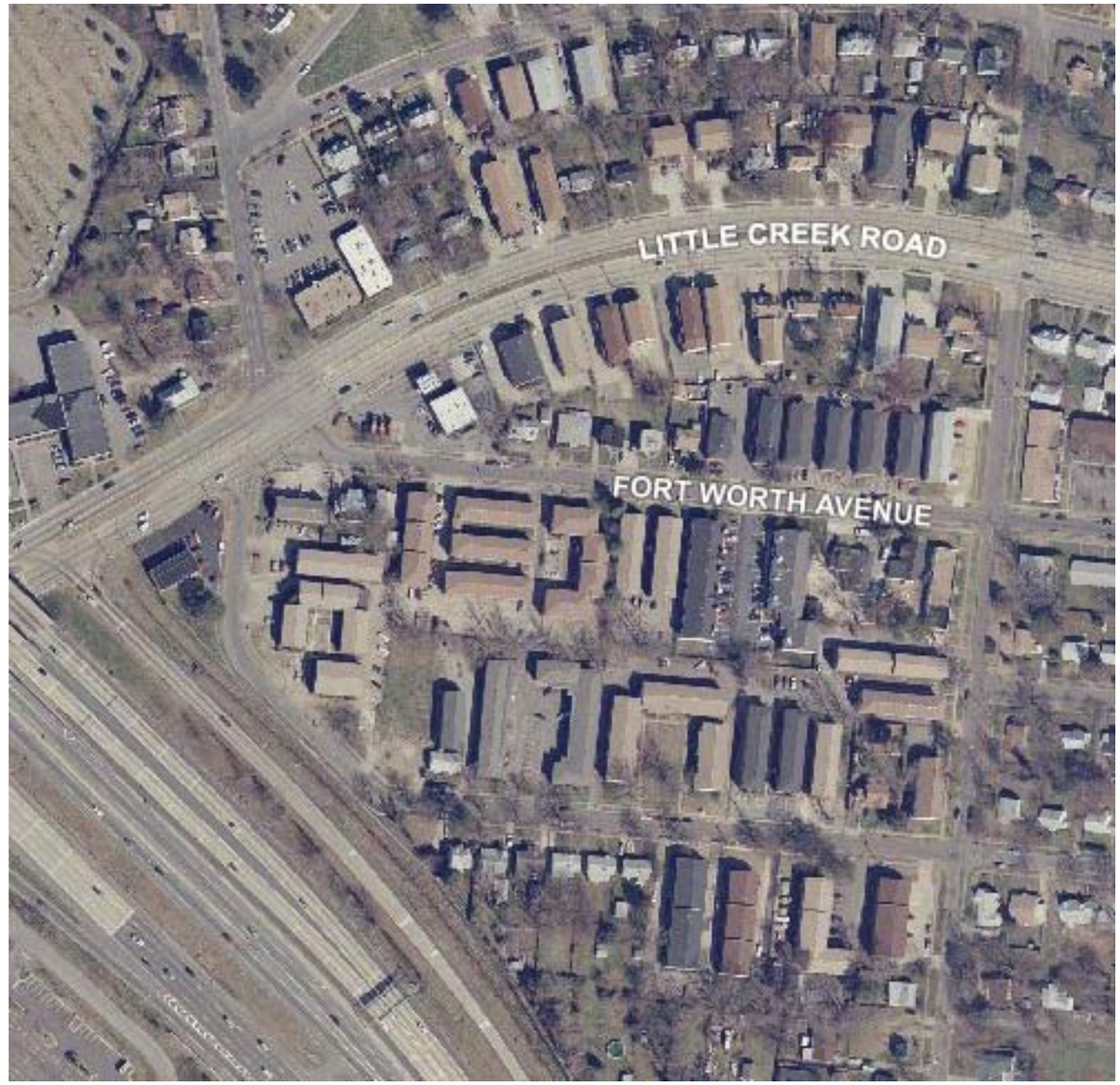
REDEVELOPMENT OF THE TEXAS STREETS

As the aerial at right clearly shows, the high-density walk-up apartments constructed in the Texas Streets section of Denby Park are, for the most part, not desirable housing. They have been built too close together, without appropriate provision of open space, and without amenities. The maze-like character of the resulting development, its proximity to highly-travelled Little Creek Road and to Interstate - 64 make it unfortunately suitable for drug dealing and for serving as a base for other criminal activity. The Norfolk police report that the situation in these buildings is getting worse. They recommend major change: the acquisition and demolition of these buildings, before the situation has even more adverse impacts on the surrounding neighborhoods.

The many respectable people who are living in these buildings are being victimized by the current situation. If the City intervenes, it is obligated to work with all tenants in each of the buildings acquired to find appropriate relocation housing for them.

If the City of Norfolk takes action to remove these buildings, we recommend that they not be replaced with more garden apartments, which could be subject to the same kinds of negative pressures that have adversely impacted the current development. Instead, we suggest a mixed use development, making use of the Uptown Norfolk concept, as described in the retail market analysis.

This development would consist of a 200 room hotel and associated function rooms, restaurant and parking deck,



at the most prominent location: the corner of Little Creek Road and Fort Worth Avenue. The room tower of the hotel would be visible from the Interstate, and would serve both the Uptown District and the Naval Base, which is only a short distance to the west on Little Creek Road. Norfolk's Economic Development Department reports substantial developer interest in identifying a hotel site in the general Uptown area.

We show Fort Worth Avenue being widened to 100 feet, so that it can serve as the main street for local traffic within the new development. Little Creek Road provides access, but cars make turns into individual businesses from Fort Worth.

In phase 1 of the new development, we show 125,000 square feet of medium-box retail, as recommended by the economic analysis, plus 25,000 square feet of other stores, including a destination restaurant at the most prominent entrance location. Our finding is that this amount of potential retail development is feasible for the Uptown District now, even before the construction of the Wal-Mart. In this first phase, all parking except that for the hotel is provided at grade. The 750 at-grade car spaces shown are sufficient to support the retail development.

The combination of the hotel, which provides a focus of activity at night, and the active retail and restaurant uses, should prevent this area from ever again becoming a focus of unlawful activity, and its excellent retail location will be put to a better use than drug dealing.

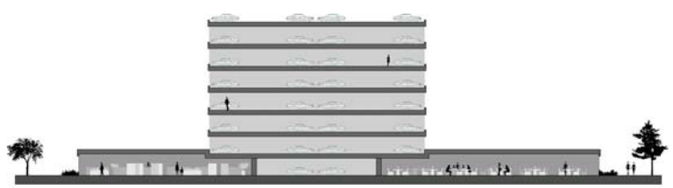
If at all possible, we recommend that the City work with the current owners of these properties to create a development corporation that will represent these owners

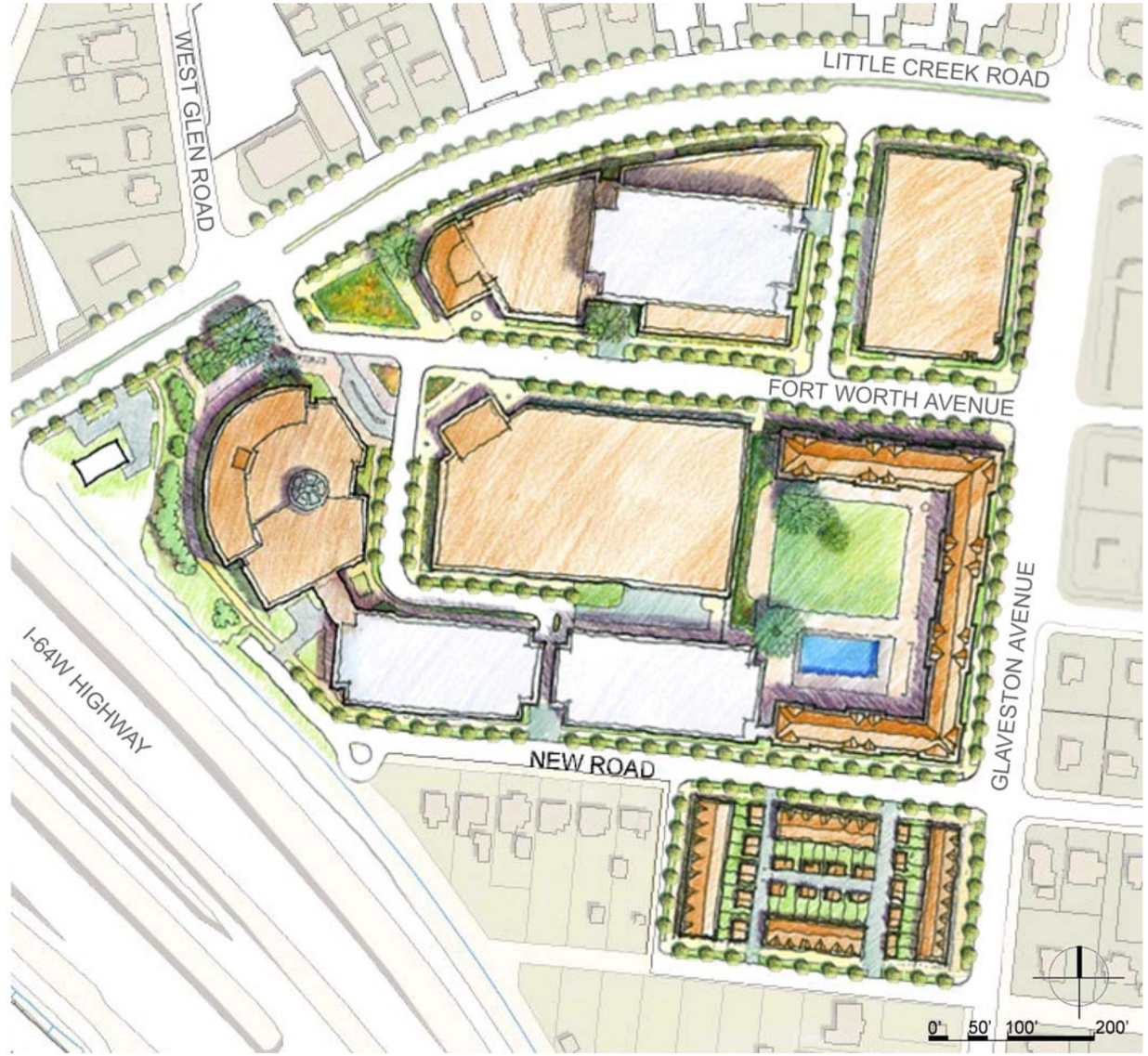
in proportion to their land holdings. This proposal offers these owners a way out of an increasingly untenable situation.

In a second phase of development, the at-grade parking lots are replaced by 200 market-rate apartments, additional retail and some 40 town houses, making it a true mixed-use, 24-hour community.

The apartments are 5-story elevator buildings, organized around a private courtyard, with their own secured garage, swimming pool and other amenities. They have restaurants and other retail on the portion of their ground floor facing Fort Worth Avenue. Buildings like this have worked well in other uptown districts, including Uptown Dallas. The parking lot to the south is replaced with individual town houses, with alley access to their own garages. Houses and apartments something like this can be found in Norfolk's West Freemason Street district downtown. While there is no waterfront nearby, this location has excellent access to the entire region, and could be a desirable residential address if a new environment is created as shown.

The at-grade parking is replaced at this phase with a garage with ground-floor retail as shown in the section below.



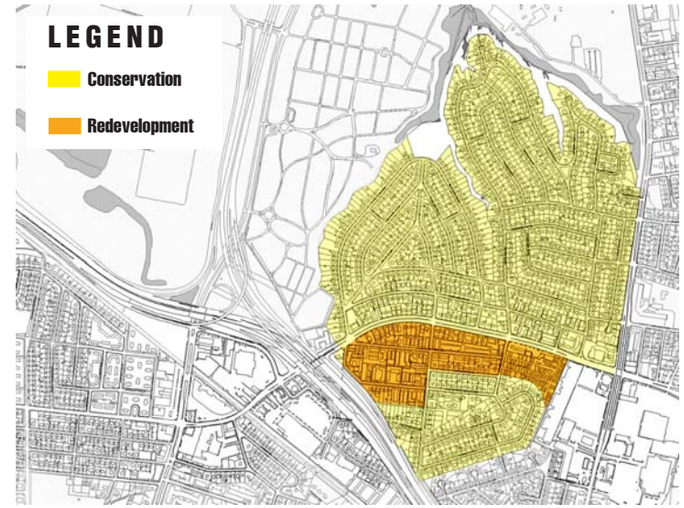


In the next phase, to the east along an enlarged Fort Worth Avenue, there will be another 250 units of apartments, also designed in five-story elevator buildings around private courtyards with their own parking garage. On the south side, facing the single family houses across Munden Avenue will be a row of about 20 townhouses.

To the north along Little Creek Road are public park spaces, a day care center, and a branch library or other public facility. This design opens up the new development to the Monticello Village and Oakdale Farms neighborhoods on the north side of Little Creek.

The next phase adds another 160 units of courtyard apartments with their own garage, plus about 40 units of live-work townhouses. Live-work buildings, which have a small shop or office on the ground floor and the owner's residence above, are an increasingly popular form of development in many cities. The very accessible location for these units within the Uptown District should make them highly sought-after. This development would replace an existing mobile home park. While there is no immediate problem created by this mobile home park, looking forward a generation it is not an appropriate use within an important destination area like the Uptown District.

Ultimately, when the Southern Shopping Center is redeveloped to more intensive uses, Fort Worth Avenue should be extended as shown on page 32, to link up with the new Wal-Mart on the east side of Tidewater Drive.



The City of Norfolk should create a Conservation District encompassing the Monticello Village, Oakdale Farms, and Denby Park neighborhoods as shown above, to protect and enhance these areas as the redevelopment described is taking place.

On page 35, the perspective drawing looks east along Fort Worth Avenue, with new medium-box retail in the foreground and the courtyard apartment buildings with ground floor retail further east. This vibrant new main street will be within easy walking distance of houses in the surrounding neighborhoods, as well as an important regional destination.

Long-range development plan for the Texas Streets area.
200 Room Hotel
200,000 Square feet of Retail
610 Apartments
60 Townhouses
40 Live-work Units
2 Community Facilities

Current Street and Building Pattern

Proposed Street Pattern

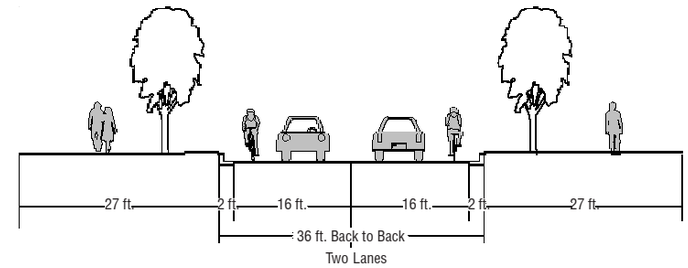
Texas Streets Area Traffic Plan

As redevelopment occurs, travel patterns and traffic volumes will change throughout the area. Envisioned development intensity at build-out in this area has the potential to generate 11,000 to 13,000 new trips per day and 700 trips in the AM peak hour and 1,200 trips in the PM peak hour. An important point to note, although much of the existing land use and development within this area is undesirable, it does generate a measurable amount of traffic, which would reduce the net increase in traffic generation. With the existing framework of streets that connect to Little Creek Road at signalized and unsignalized intersections, peak hour travel demand is anticipated to be adequately served. The majority of outbound traffic desiring to travel westbound on Little Creek Road will flow to the signalized intersections. Traffic desiring to travel east on Little Creek Road and north and south on Tidewater Drive will filter through the interconnected street network to these and other intersections.

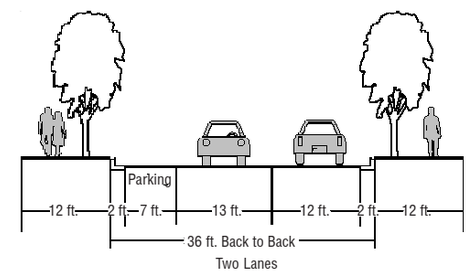
Fort Worth Avenue will become "Main Street" for the redevelopment area, attracting pedestrian-scale development and street-side destinations and activities. While adequate capacity must be provided, consideration also must be given to safety and overall street attractiveness and scale. The cross section that is illustrated is intended to accomplish these. Back of curb to back of curb, the street is recommended to be 50 feet in width in the mid-block where there is on-street parking. In the mid-block, the 50-foot cross section would provide for on-street parking on both sides as well as two wide travel lanes (5 feet in each direction of which can be striped for a bike lane). At intersections, the street would be reduced in width to 36 feet through the use of bulb-outs. The remaining area in the new Fort Worth Avenue right of way will be extra-wide sidewalks: 20 feet on each side mid-block, and 27 feet wide at the intersections, as shown in the diagrams at right.

North of San Antonio Avenue, Galveston Avenue is recommended to have a 36-foot cross section, back of curb to back of curb. In the mid-block within this cross section, the potential would exist to have signed, on-street parking on one side. At intersections, parking would be prohibited in favor of an exclusive left-turn lane. The same cross section is recommended for Dallas Street north of Fort Worth Avenue.

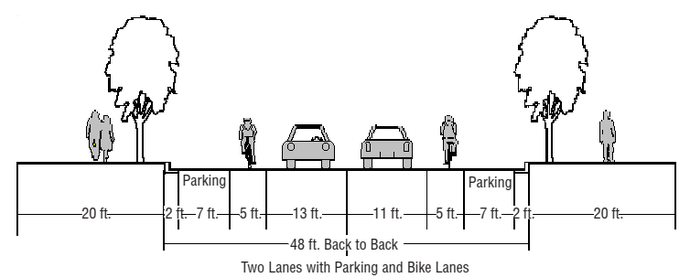
Little Creek Road will continue to be a primary arterial throughout the area. The existing six-lane median divided cross section should be maintained and enhanced to provide at-minimum, 5-foot wide sidewalks along both sides with 7-foot wide planted street-side buffer (area between the sidewalk and the back of the curb). As redevelopment occurs, it will be important to reserve adequate right-of-way to provide for these improvements. The emphasis on Little Creek Road to carry through-traffic will not be diminished by the redevelopment of blocks to the south. The map on next page shows street widths and traffic signal locations for the whole Texas Street area.



Fort Worth Avenue Cross Section at Bulb-out Locations



Galveston Avenue, Dallas Street, and San Antonio Boulevard Cross Section



Fort Worth Avenue Mid-Block Cross Section

Recommended traffic signal
Right-in/right-out
Right-in/right-out
Paired left-over
Little Creek Rd
Existing traffic signal
Right-in/right-out (south side)
Fort Worth Ave
60-foot cross section
90-foot cross section
90-foot cross section
60-foot cross section
Galveston Avenue
San Antonio Blvd
Dallas St
60-foot cross section
90-foot cross section

Looking east on Fort Worth Avenue after development is complete. The hotel is at the right.

Redevelopment at Wards Corner

The aerial photo of the Wards Corner shopping district centered around Granby Street and Little Creek Road clearly shows that the development west of the railway tracks does not have enough parking to support the retail that is there today. If these sites were redeveloped, the amount of new retail possible would be much smaller than is there now, because of the parking requirement. More intensive retail development would require parking decks, and, even then, the sites are not large enough to create desirable developments.

In any case, the new Wal-Mart is going to move the center of gravity of Uptown retail development along Little Creek Road to the east, to the other side of I – 64.

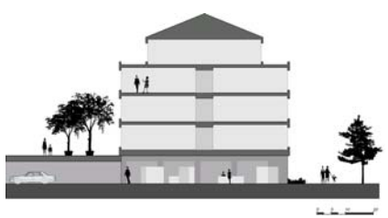
The way out of this impasse for the property owners at Wards Corner is to consider a different building type, the five-story elevator apartments, built around courtyards as already described as an element of Phase 2 redevelopment of the Texas Streets. This building type will support its own parking deck, and retail space can be provided on the ground floors facing the major streets. Additional parking for the retail can also be provided behind the stores under the courtyards, as shown in the section drawing opposite. Buildings like these have been developed in other uptown districts, notably Uptown Dallas, and are being proposed in Nashville and many other cities.

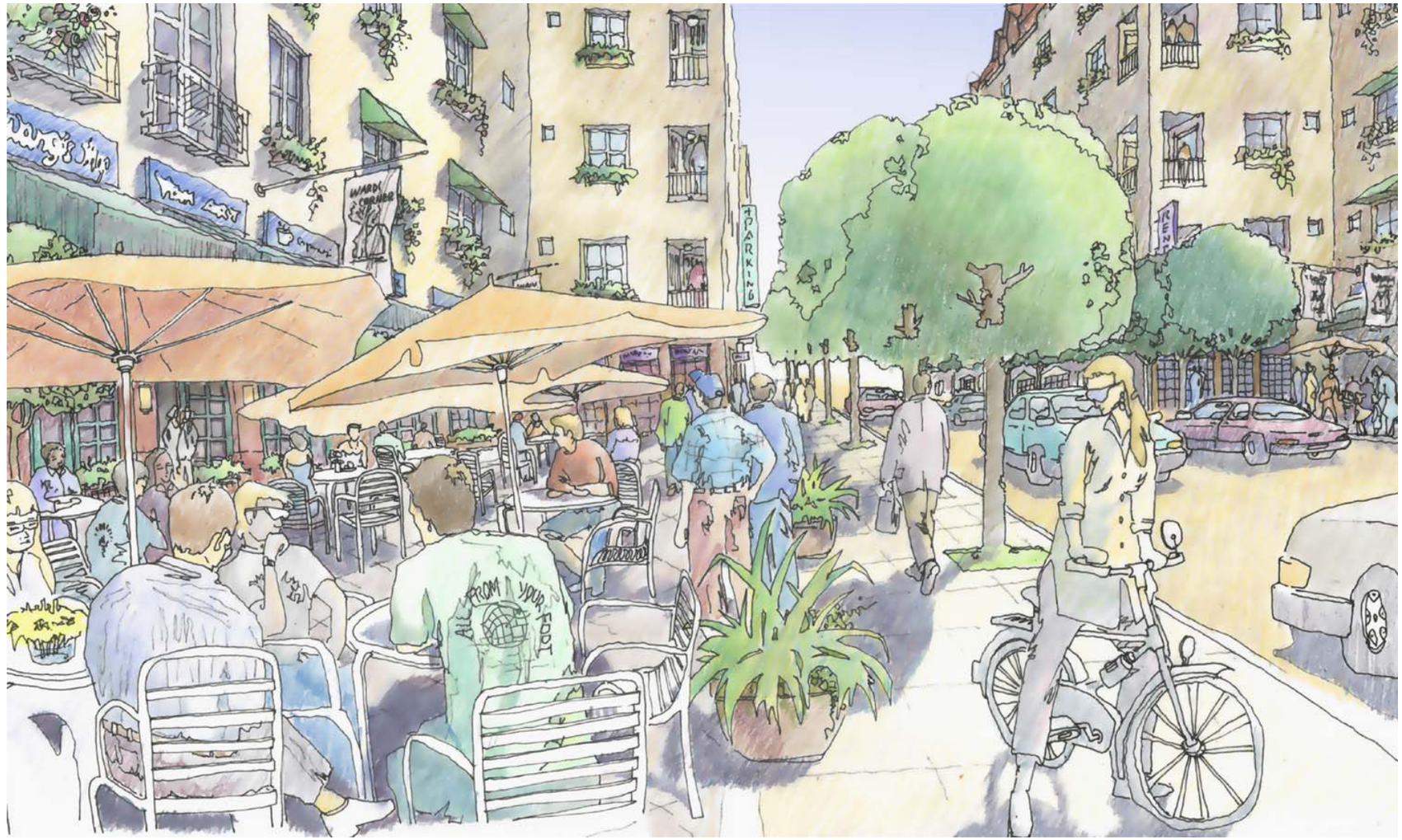
The City would have to create a new Wards Corner zoning district to make this development possible, which we recommend doing. The perspective drawing opposite shows what the new Wards Corner could look like if this kind of development takes place.

Looking east on Little Creek Road between the two new developments. Parking for the retail is under the courtyard as shown in the section. Residents' parking is in garages.

North of Little Creek Road:
247 residential units,
60,000 square feet of retail,
500 cars

South of Little Creek Road:
300 Residential Units
60,000 square feet of retail,
700 cars





Wards Corner Area Traffic Plan

The Little Creek Road/Granby Street intersection is a primary bottleneck location within the study area. Existing development along Granby Street and Little Creek Road has occurred discontinuously and as a result, numerous driveways, conflicting vehicle movements, and disconnected land uses are all adjacent to both roadways. The proposed redevelopment west of the railroad will replace this type of development and traffic with a more orderly and predictable pattern.

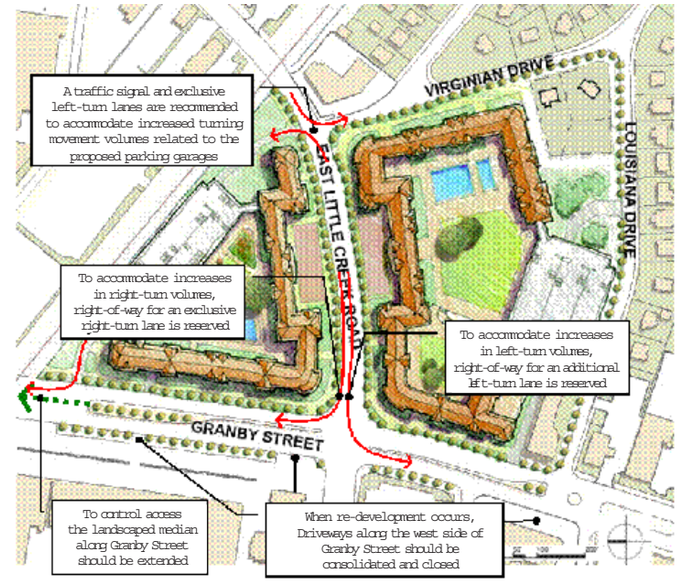
The redevelopment plan envisions multi-story mixed use buildings with residential and commercial uses being served by two multi-story parking garages: one north and one south of Little Creek Road. As a part of the transportation evaluation, generalized traffic flow patterns were evaluated to determine where improvements would be necessary to support proposed redevelopment and growth in through-traffic along Little Creek Road and Granby Street. Generalized flow patterns and recommended improvements are indicated in the adjacent figure. The figure on page 39 also illustrates recommended transportation improvements throughout the area including:

- Installation of a traffic signal at the Little Creek Road/ Virginian Drive intersection
- Reservation of additional right-of-way on the westbound Little Creek Road approach to the Little Creek Road/Granby Street intersection to accommodate an additional exclusive left-turn lane and an exclusive right-turn lane
- Retaining the existing landscaped median along Granby Street
- Consolidation and relocation of points of access

Although not immediately in the Wards Corner area, the figure also illustrates recommended improvements to the section of Little Creek Road between the railroad and I-64. These improvements include:

- Closure and consolidation of existing individual site driveways
- Construction of a landscaped median (as approximately shown)
- Provision of a street-side buffer and continuous sidewalks
- Relocation of Admiral Taussig Boulevard (and its traffic signal) to tie to the existing Kroger Shopping Center/Farm Fresh Shopping Center intersection

With the exception of the relocation/re-construction of Admiral Taussig Boulevard and its traffic signal, the other recommendations can be implemented incrementally through negotiations with individual property owners and as spot redevelopment occurs. The re-alignment of Admiral Taussig Boulevard is recommended to occur when redevelopment occurs within the area. Relocating this roadway has the potential to reduce the number of traffic signals, improve traffic flow characteristics, increase signal spacing, improve corridor aesthetics, and improve access to adjacent properties along Little Creek Road. It also has the potential to provide better positioned public street frontage, which may encourage area redevelopment.



The Railroad Crossing

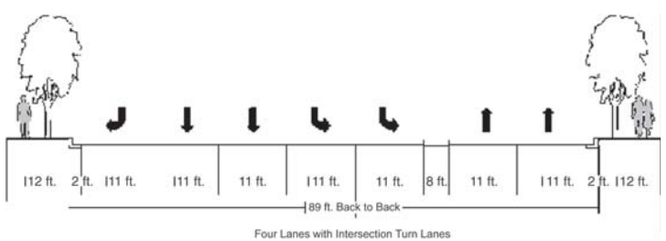
As traffic increases along Granby Street and Little Creek Road and the frequency and length of trains increase along the railroad corridor, vehicle delays at the existing at-grade crossing will lengthen. No feasible diversion options are available from Little Creek Road or Granby Street during train events, which is one reason why the plan recommends more residential development and less retail intensity west of the railroad.

During the study, grade separated crossings were studied and included both tunneling the railroad and tunneling Little Creek Road and Granby Streets. Depressing the railroad is possible, but would be very expensive and difficult to construct. It would require that

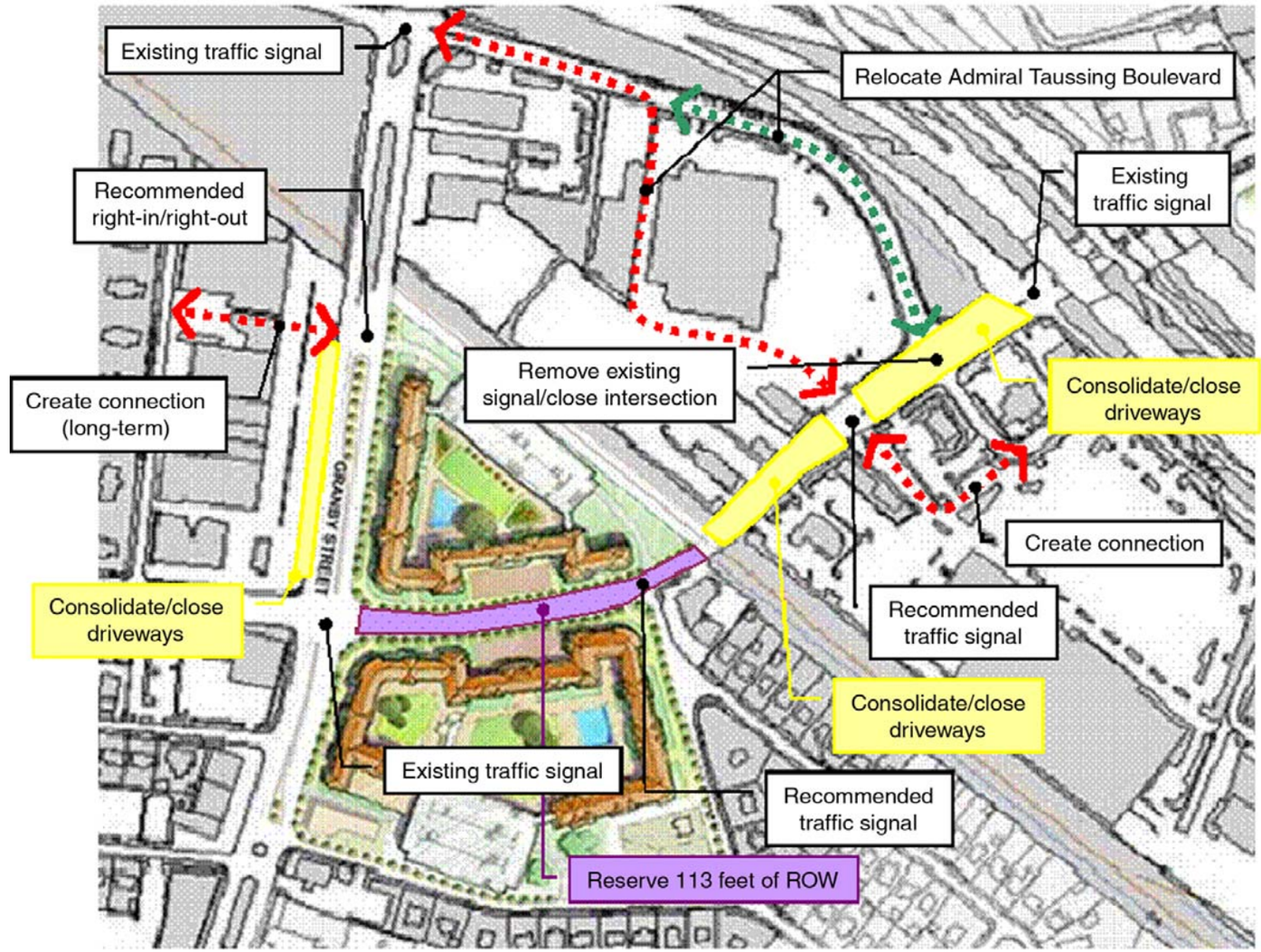
the railway start a downgrade approximately 1 mile on each side of Granby Street and Little Creek Road in order to gain sufficient clearance under each of these facilities. In addition to reconstruction of more than 2 miles of railroad, the construction process would disrupt railway operations, which is infeasible.

Depressing Little Creek Road and/or Granby Street also would be difficult and expensive. The short distance between the tunnels and the Little Creek Road/Granby Street intersection would necessitate severing existing access along these approaches. East and north of the railroad, similar actions would be required. Depressing these streets would improve the ability to move through traffic, but would be destructive to property values of the immediate area by depriving fronting streets of access and creating unsightly retaining walls.

In our judgment, depressing Little Creek Road and/or Granby Street creates more problems than would be solved. In any case, should funds become available for railroad crossing improvements to be made in this area, priority already has been given to the existing at-grade crossing in the vicinity of Hampton Boulevard and Terminal Boulevard at the main entrance to Norfolk International Terminals.



Proposed LIttle Creek Road Cross Section between Granby Street and I-64



PROPOSALS FOR TITUSTOWN

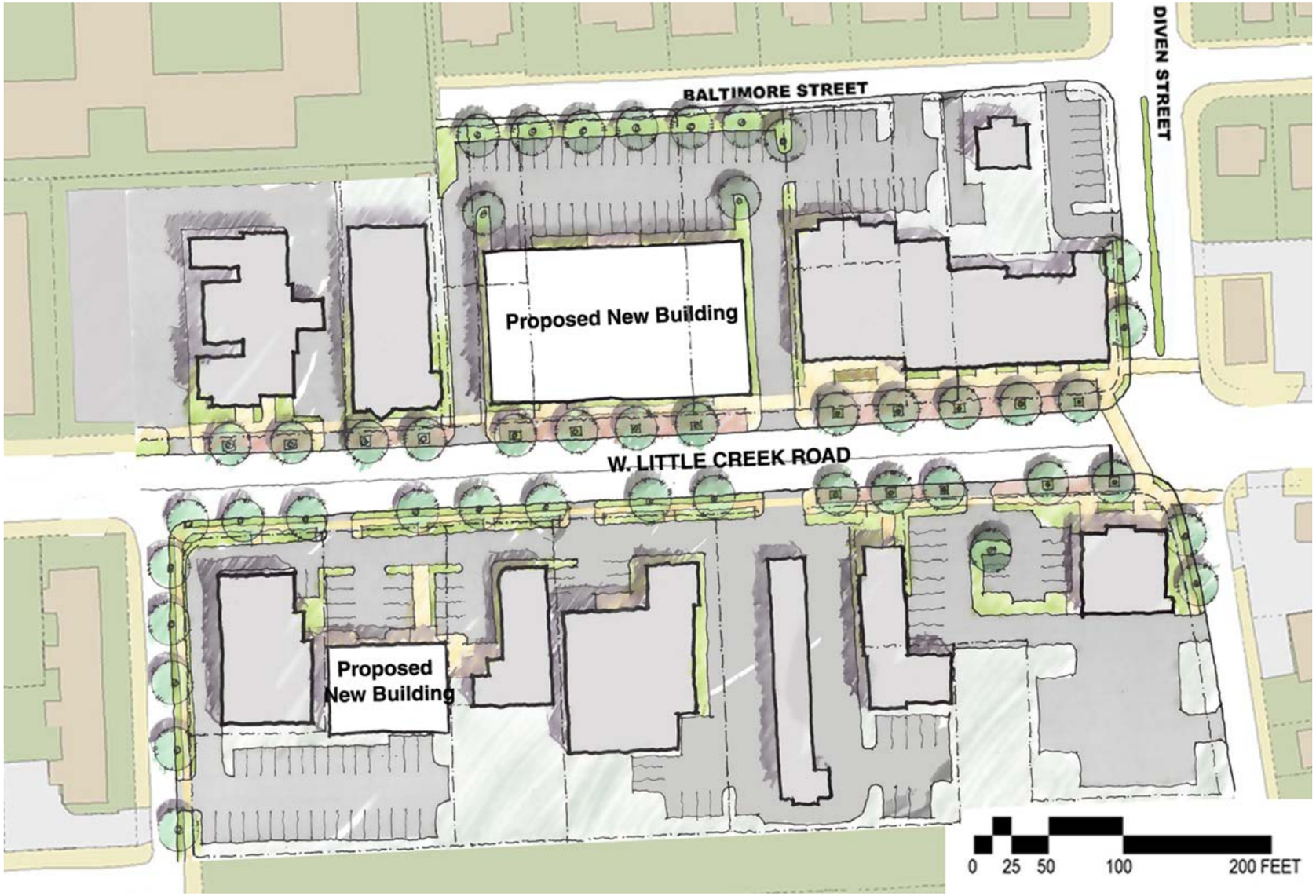
The aerial photo of the Titustown retail district immediately to the west of Diven Street shows several serious problems. One is the fragmented nature of the retail development, with its confused and inadequate parking. The second is the presence of two apartment projects which have been the location for serious law-enforcement problems. The design of these buildings creates inferior residential accommodation on a major street, and with drive-through access, makes them a haven for drug dealers. As at the Texas Streets, the respectable people living in these buildings are being victimized by this situation. If the city intervenes, it has a commitment to find appropriate replacement housing for these residents.

In the drawings on the next page we show these two small apartment complexes removed, and their sites replaced by retail buildings which will reinforce the other retail buildings on the block. We also show an improved, shared parking regime, which, while it will be difficult to negotiate among the various owners, should result in a retail center that works much better for everybody.

In addition, we recommend tree planting and other street improvements. The objective of this plan is to make this small retail district a convenience for the homeowners in the area as well as for people who are driving along West Little Creek Road. If successful, the existence of this improved retail center, adjacent to Titustown's new recreation center, should have a favorable impact on the surrounding neighborhoods.

We don't underestimate the difficulty and complexity of this plan, despite its small scale, and recommend that the City create a local development corporation with full-time staff to help implement it.

West Little Creek Road in Titustown.
The Diven Street intersection is on the right.



Titustown Retail District Plan showing new streetscape and two new buildings.

Titustown Retail District looking east towards Diven Street.
Utility wires are underground, or re-routed behind buildings.

Titustown Area Traffic Plan

Traveling west along Little Creek Road from Granby Street, retail development gives way to primarily residential neighborhoods—with the exception of Titustown—near the Little Creek Road/Diven Street intersection, and commercial development near the Little Creek Road/Hampton Boulevard intersection. Titustown has a collection of businesses that face Little Creek Road and provide services to the surrounding neighborhood. In the proposed redevelopment plan, infill retail development and parking is proposed.

As redevelopment occurs in this area, individual property access configurations (driveways) should be combined, closed, and relocated wherever possible, continuing the theme of preserving the capacity of the primary arterials in the study area. Recommendations along Little Creek Road include:

- Combining, closing, and relocating driveways to alleyways and rear streets (Baltimore Street) where possible
- Eliminating head-in parking immediately adjacent to Little Creek Road
- Developing shared parking areas for businesses that are at the rear or to the side of buildings that front the street
- Continuing to prohibit on-street parking on Little Creek Road

The redevelopment proposals for Titustown provide new off-street parking while eliminating existing head-in parking spaces accessed directly from Little Creek Road. The existing head-in parking arrangement contributes to considerable safety and capacity issues along Little Creek Road by inviting the potential for a backing vehicle to block or be struck by through traffic on Little Creek Road. In further support of transportation recommendations, the plan consolidates and realigns driveways as well as simplifies access to development along Little Creek Road.

Diven Street is a direct connection between Terminal Boulevard and Little Creek Road. Within the study area, it is an important link since few streets connect Little Creek Road and Terminal Boulevard due to the existing railroad, the Virginia Power easement, and established neighborhoods. The importance of this connection is supported by the number of through trips—those trips without a local origin or destination—carried on Diven Street. Most travelers using this street are coming from or traveling to Granby Street, I-64, Norfolk International Terminal, or Naval Station Norfolk.

Being a main street of the Titustown neighborhood, cut-through traffic on Diven Street is an impediment to the continuity of the area. Implementing measures that restrict the flow of traffic on Diven Street would be counter-productive since it would only push the traffic to other streets, increasing the strain on those facilities. Instead, the following starter ideas (also shown in the adjacent figure) for traffic calming measures are recommended. These are intended to help regulate traffic speed while accommodating volume in the corridor and improving the compatibility of the through-traffic with the adjacent neighborhood.

- Narrow the southbound approach of the Little Creek Road/Diven Street intersection to two outbound (southbound, Diven Street) travel lanes and one inbound (northbound) lane through the construction of a hardscaped gateway median treatment extending from Little Creek Road to within 75 feet of Baltimore Street
- Narrow the northbound approach of the Little Creek Road/Terminal Boulevard intersection to two outbound (northbound, Diven Street) travel lanes and one inbound (southbound) travel lane through the construction of a hardscaped gateway median treatment extending from Terminal Boulevard to Matthew Henson Street with a median break for the driveway along the railroad corridor

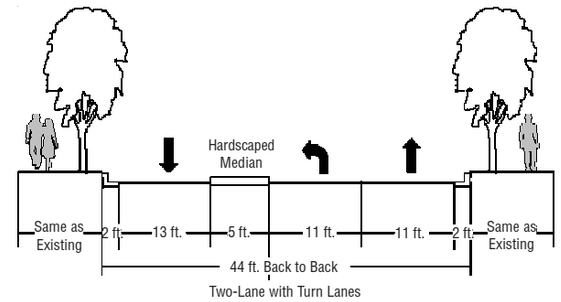
These traffic calming concepts are presented in response to concerns raised at community meetings about traffic on Diven Street, at the intersection of Diven and Terminal Boulevard, and at the intersection of Diven and Little Creek Road.

Little Creek Road at Hampton Boulevard

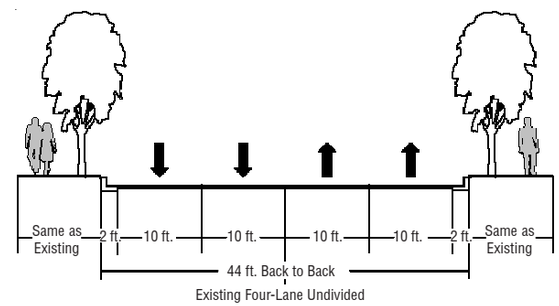
At the western edge of the study area is the Little Creek Road/Hampton Boulevard intersection. The north leg of this intersection is a gateway to the port and naval station, the south leg is a gateway to carefully preserved historic neighborhoods and Old Dominion University, and the east leg is the route to the new “Uptown.” As a part of the planned improvements to the Hampton Boulevard/ Terminal Boulevard intersection, Little Creek Road is planned to be realigned in the vicinity of Hampton

Boulevard to reduce the horizontal curve that currently exists. As a part of this reconstruction, it is recommended to enhance Little Creek Road for approximately 200 to 300 feet to include a landscaped median, widened planted street-side buffer—minimum 5 feet wide (area between the back of curb and sidewalk), and minimum 5-foot wide sidewalks on both sides of the street.

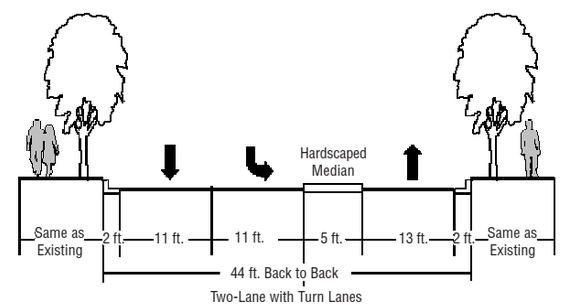
To the north of the Little Creek Road/Hampton Boulevard intersection, the Hampton Boulevard/Terminal Boulevard intersection is planned to be grade separated through the construction of a partial directional interchange. In initial concepts that have been developed, Hampton Boulevard will be depressed and Terminal Boulevard and the railroad will be bridged across as needed. The ultimate improvement will include ramps to serve the grade separation and minor local street realignments and closures to accommodate the interchange. Currently, the project is unfunded.



Diven Street cross section approaching Terminal Boulevard



Existing Diven Street cross section



Diven Street cross section approaching Little Creek Road

Before

After

Housing Fronting Little Creek Road

There is a question whether single-family houses should continue to front on Little Creek Road where individual yards and driveways do not relate well to such a heavily trafficked street. While some of the houses continue to be well-maintained, others have clearly become rental properties and have been allowed to deteriorate. There is much more housing choice in the Norfolk region than there was when these houses were built originally, and it may be that in the long run, all the single family houses fronting on Little Creek Road should be replaced by other residential uses. The answer in the past has been to permit the replacement of individual houses with high-density walk-up apartments, sometimes with balcony access and parking on the ground level, sometimes designed like conventional garden apartments - but without the garden setting. This kind of housing has not been a success. It has been a cause of major law-enforcement problems at both the Texas Streets and in Titustown. Is there an alternative?

The Greater Wards Corner Area does not at present include any land zoned for attached town houses. The advantage of town houses is that they have individual owners who will maintain them and that a major street is a more appropriate location for town houses than for detached houses on lots.

As the Greater Wards Corner Area is redeveloped, and its desirable location is better understood, there may come a time when rezoning for townhouses becomes appropriate in some locations. We recommend a very cautious policy by the City towards such rezonings, but illustrate some ways in which town houses could be interpolated on to residential lots along Little Creek Road, particularly where the land is zoned multi-family.

NEXT STEPS:

1. The most important step is for the City of Norfolk to take the initiative in implementing the first stage of the redevelopment of the Texas Streets area as shown in this plan. The properties in the first phase, we are advised, meet the definition of a blighted area. However, rather than for the City to pursue condemnation for blight, the best course of action would be for the current owners of these properties to form a development corporation in which each owner is a shareholder in proportion to the amount of land each owns. The City should then work with these owners to help them structure a corporation and market the consolidated property to a developer. If a voluntary agreement among the property owners is not possible, the City will have to conduct a study to document officially the blighted condition of these properties and then use its condemnation powers to acquire the properties, as the situation in this area is creating serious problems for a much of the Greater Wards Corner region. In either case, the City will need to support development by making the street improvements shown in the plan, by making the necessary changes to the zoning code, and by assisting the relocation of existing residents.

The first phase of development is designed to be entirely conventional in real-estate market terms. The hotel will require a parking deck, but that is common practice in hotel development, as hotels can charge guests for parking. The parking for the medium-box retailing and destination retail can be accommodated at grade, if all the property shown in the plan is included. In later phases, we have shown the parking for the retail moved to a parking deck, and the land formerly occupied by parking developed as town houses and apartments. By the time this phase happens, the market position for the area will have greatly improved and will support the higher prices and rents needed to make this development happen.

2. The acquisition by the City of the former Jewish Community Center, which is taking place as this document is being completed, is a major step in securing the future for the Wards Corner area, as it will provide a much-needed recreation resource in this densely-developed area.

3, 4, 5. The three projects that form the later phases of development shown in the plans for the Texas Streets, many of them also on blighted properties, should be implemented as the market permits, if possible without the intervention of the City in acquiring most of these properties. Portions of the plan require acquisition by the City of properties for community facilities and street improvements. Otherwise the City should support redevelopment by working to help organize property owners to redevelop their properties and by making the street improvements and the necessary changes in zoning.

6. Fort Worth Avenue is shown in these plans as extended through what is now the Southern Shopping Center connecting to Tidewater Drive opposite where the entrance street for the new Wal-Mart is to be located. It will not be possible to complete the widening and extension of Fort Worth Avenue until the Southern Shopping Center is redeveloped – which may be many years in the future. However, the City should record this planned street improvement so that it can be implemented as conditions permit. By creating an access street parallel to Little Creek Road that avoids the grade-separated intersection at Tidewater Drive, Little Creek Road will continue to function as a through traffic street between Tidewater Drive and I – 64, without congestion attributable to new development on its south side.

7. Properties in the north-east quadrant of the intersection of Little Creek Road and Granby Street, Wards Corner, are shown in this plan as redeveloped to mid-rise apartments designed around courtyards, comparable to some of the buildings in downtown Norfolk's West Freemason district and to apartments in uptown locations in other cities. There would be retail space for restaurants and service commercial along the Granby Street and Little Creek Road frontages. Given changes in the retail market, the type of development suggested in the plan will be more successful than the kind of retail development currently present on these sites. The city should support this plan by appropriate zoning changes and possibly with assistance in consolidating the corner property, currently occupied by a gas station, with the rest of the site.

8. A comparable development is shown for the south-east quadrant of the Wards Corner intersection where existing strip commercial is shown replaced by mid-rise apartments with retail on the ground floor. Like the site on the opposite side of the street, these properties are not large enough to be redeveloped with a significant amount of modern retail. Again, when the owners of the property are prepared to redevelop, the city should support the development concept with the appropriate changes in zoning.

9. A the Titustown retail center on Little Creek Road, a miniature version of the crime problems endemic in the Texas Streets area is dealt with in a comparable way: by the suggested acquisition and removal of two problem apartment buildings - or the participation of the owners in new development - with additional stores, consolidated parking, and street furniture improvements.

10. As the real-estate market in the Greater Wards Corner area improves, it is suggested that other small, high-density apartments along Little Creek Road be replaced with owner-occupied townhouses. The plan illustrates how these in-fill townhouse sites could be designed, if the zoning is changed to permit them.

As these 10 elements of the plan are carried out, they should have a positive influence on all the neighborhoods of the Greater Wards Corner Area.

Not only does the plan replace a concentration of criminal activities in the Texas Streets area with new development, but people living in the Monticello Village and Oakdale Farms areas, plus the south part of Denby Park, will be able to walk in a few minutes to a new pedestrian-friendly mixed-use center with shops and restaurants, a hotel, community facilities and a population living in high quality apartments and town houses that should keep the area busy and safe both during the day and during evening hours. Few other neighborhoods in the Hampton Roads area will have comparable advantages, which will make houses and apartments in Monticello Village and Oakdale Farms not only more desirable than they are today, but more desirable than in many other locations. While there are pockets of criminal activity and deteriorated buildings outside the redevelopment area, we expect to see substantial investment in improving such places by private investors as the publicly-sponsored redevelopment goes forward.

When the owners of the two larger shopping centers at Wards Corner decide to upgrade their properties in accordance with this plan, assisted by changes in the zoning for the area, we expect that the introduction of a substantial population of residents in high-quality apartments and condos will cause the owners of other commercial real-estate in the surrounding blocks to upgrade their properties also. The creation of an urban place along Little Creek Road between the two apartment complexes, as shown in the plan, will provide a location for new street-related restaurants and shops that should be an attractive destination for people living in the surrounding neighborhoods.

The improvement of the Titustown retail district in accordance with this plan will create an attractive gateway for the surrounding neighborhoods, with more convenience stores, room for larger, more ambitious restaurants, better parking, and a new streetscape design that adds trees and pedestrian-scale light fixtures – and moves the utility wires behind the buildings.

Again, we expect that the new investment in Titustown, plus the removal of two problem buildings with a long history of criminal activity, will encourage investment and improvements in surrounding properties.

This plan should help the Greater Wards Corner region realize its full potential as one of the most desirable locations in the whole Hampton Roads region.

Implementation Action Plan

The table at the end of this section summarizes each action item identified by Wallace, Roberts & Todd as critical next steps for this plan along with the City of Norfolk's current and on-going initiatives for neighborhood improvements, including the *Come Home to Norfolk Now Initiative*, and the programs offered by the Norfolk Redevelopment & Housing Authority. This table is intended to be a fluid document that will be amended as development and partnership opportunities arise and as changes in the physical, social, political, and economic environments occur over time. The implementation plan identifies the organization or agency that is primarily responsible for implementing the action item, a general time frame described as short-term, mid-term, or long-term, and the projected total cost to complete the item. The timeline for implementation of each action item is defined by these estimated time frames:

Short-term: 5 years or less

Mid-term: 6 to 10 years

Long-term: 11 to 15 years

The implementation plan places each action item within one of four color-coded cost ranges:

The green dot (●) indicates projects that will be implemented by utilizing existing resources including staff time and services. This category includes community implemented projects, private initiatives, and fully funded current projects.

The orange dot (●) indicates projects that are projected to cost within the $100,000 or less range.

The blue dot (●) indicates projects that are projected to cost greater than $100,000 but less than one million.

The red dot (●) indicates projects that are projected to cost several millions of dollars.

Plan Coordination and Evaluation

The Department of Planning and Community Development will take the lead role in coordinating and managing the implementation plan. Successful implementation of this plan also requires the concentrated efforts of other City Departments and agencies listed in this plan including, but not limited to, the Departments of Development, Public Works, Neighborhood and Leisure Services, and the Norfolk Redevelopment & Housing Authority.

The plan will be implemented over a period of several years and will require considerable City resources to fully implement. Progress reports will be provided by the Department of Planning & Community Development to City Council every two years so that they may evaluate how well city resources are being used to achieve the goals of the plan. In addition, it is expected that staff will continue to work with the community to re-evaluate their goals and priorities every two years as a means to update the implementation plan. The Greater Wards Corner Comprehensive Plan will be incorporated into the updated Comprehensive Development Plan for the City of Norfolk (Norfolk 2025 Plan).

Funding

Adequate funding is necessary for the successful implementation of the plan. It is expected that City Council will commit the resources needed to accomplish the various neighborhood improvements described in the approved plan.

By adopting the Greater Wards Corner Comprehensive Plan, the City Council demonstrates the City's commitment to a phased implementation strategy that will be funded over several years. Adoption of the plan does not immediately commit funds. Each component listed will require separate and specific consideration for funding through the City's annual budget process. The figures included in the implementation tables are funding guidelines that will be refined as projects become clearly identified.

GREATER WARDS CORNER COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

IMPLENTATION AND ACTION PLAN

IMPLEMENTATION ITEM	ACTION	LEAD RESPONSIBILITY	TIME FRAME	COST CATEGORY	COMMENTS
HOUSING AND NEIGHBORHOOD DEVELOPMENT					
Conservation District Designation	Pursue neighborhood conservation districts in Monticello Village, Oakdale Farms, and Denby Park	NRHA and Department of Planning and Community Development	Phase I	●	
Acquire Vacant Lots and Blighted Structures	Identify and pursue acquisition of vacant lots and blighted properties through GEM Program	Department of Planning and Community Development, NRHA	Phase I	●	Ongoing Activity
Home Ownership Marketing and Promotions	Implement marketing and promotion strategies for available housing opportunities	Department of Planning and Community Development, NRHA	Phase I	●	Ongoing Activity
Home Ownership Purchase Incentives	Promote special home purchase incentives, such as down payment and closing cost assistance, and below market interest rate mortgages	NRHA	Phase I	●	
Property Improvements	Implement special outreach efforts to inform property owners of the City's strategic housing initiatives	Department of Planning and Community Development	Phase I	●	Ongoing Activity
Property Rehabilitation	Initiate property rehabilitation financing programs offered by the neighborhood conservation program	NRHA	Phase II	●	Determined by Conservation designation
Code Compliance Blight Removal	Intensify code compliance by targeting areas with re-occurring problems	Department of Neighborhood and Leisure Services, City Attorney's Office	Phase I	●	Ongoing Activity

IMPLEMENTATION ITEM	ACTION	LEAD RESPONSIBILITY	TIME FRAME	COST CATEGORY	COMMENTS
Code Compliance Community Outreach	Organize community meetings, events and other outreach programs to increase community awareness of code enforcement programs	Department of Neighborhoods and Leisure Services	Phase I	●	Ongoing Activity
Neighborhood Standards	Work with the community to develop and promote development and maintenance standards	Department of Neighborhoods and Leisure Services	Phase I	●	
Integration of New Single Family Housing and Major Modifications to Existing Housing within the Neighborhood	Promote and encourage the use of the Norfolk Design and Resource Center for architectural design and other technical resources to insure new construction and major modifications to existing structures are well integrated in style and scale with established neighborhood and housing patterns	Department of Planning and Community Development, NRHA	Phase I	●	Ongoing Activity
Town Houses and Market Rate Rentals	Encourage town homes and market rate rentals in under-used or deteriorated locations along Little Creek Road to diversify housing stock at the higher end of the market	Department of Planning and Community Development, NRHA	Phase II	●	
PARKS, RECREATION AND OPEN SPACE					
Reuse of the Former Jewish Community Center	Retrofit the building and grounds for use as a fitness and wellness center	Department of Neighborhood and Leisure Services	Phase I & II	●	
Public Facilities, Open Space Opportunities	Develop a plan to improve and enhance public facilities and parks to assure they are well maintained, staffed and programmed to offer a variety of activities to engage youth and adults; identify new open space opportunities throughout the study area	Department of Neighborhoods and Leisure Services	Phase I & II	●	Ongoing Activity
TEXAS STREETS REDEVELOPMENT PLAN					
Redevelopment Designation	Pursue the due diligence required for redevelopment eligibility and approval	NRHA, Department of Planning and Community Development	Phase I	●	
State Blight Eradication Legislation; Public Reuse	Pursue to the extent of the law, all legal authority granted to localities to remove and or acquire "blighted" properties	NRHA, City Attorney's Office	Phase I & II	●	

IMPLEMENTATION ITEM	ACTION	LEAD RESPONSIBILITY	TIME FRAME	COST CATEGORY	COMMENTS
Promote Redevelopment Strategy to Private Sector	Market the Wards Corner Comprehensive Plan, to a national audience; determine interest and private market capacity to undertake as a private venture, as well as a public/private venture	Department of Development	Phase I	🟢	
Property Acquisition Strategy/Plan	Develop a detailed acquisition plan, using previously mentioned concepts, voluntary conveyances and other creative strategies; including a sequencing component	NRHA	Phase I	🟢	Implement in Phase II and III
Develop Occupant Relocation Strategy	Develop relocation analysis and plan	NRHA	Phase I	🟢	Implement in Phase II and III
Public Infrastructure Plan (Fort Worth Avenue and Galveston Boulevard Area)	Develop infrastructure plan (street configuration, streetscapes, and utilities). Plan will require acquisition for public reuse; redevelopment activities may start at this location	Public Works	Phase II	🔴	
Zoning Change	Work with the property owner(s) or developer to create a new zoning district to accomplish redevelopment in accordance with the plan	Department of Planning and Community Development	Phase II	🟢	
Public/Private Partnerships	Continue to refine options for public/private partnership and participation in redevelopment	Department of Development	Phase I, II	🟢	
Traffic Plan	Refine and implement traffic plan as needed to support proposed development; phase activity accordingly	Public Works	Phase II & Phase III	🔴	

IMPLEMENTATION ITEM	ACTION	LEAD RESPONSIBILITY	TIME FRAME	COST CATEGORY	COMMENTS
TITUSTOWN RETAIL DISTRICT					
Traffic Plan	Refine and implement the Titustown Area Traffic Plan (traffic calming, shared parking, street connections)	Public Works	Phase I, II or III	●	Could be phased over time
Public/Private Partnerships	Continue to refine options for public/private partnership and participation in the redevelopment of the district.	Department of Development	Phase I	●	Ongoing Activity
Property Acquisition Strategy/ Plan	Develop acquisition strategy for two apartment buildings referenced by the plan	NRHA, Department of Planning and Community Development	Phase I		Implementation Phase II
Develop Occupant Relocation Strategy	Develop relocation analysis and plan	NRHA	Phase I	●	Implementation Phase II
Streetscape Study	Conduct streetscape study and design to enhance pedestrian orientation and overall attractiveness.	Department of Planning and Community Development, Public Works	Phase II	●	
Retention and Attraction of New Businesses	Promote retail development that supports the goals and objectives of the plan and facilitate the organization of a business association	Department of Development	Phase I	●	Ongoing Activity
REDEVELOPMENT AT THE INTERSECTION OF LITTLE CREEK ROAD AND GRANBY STREET					
Engage Current Property Owners	Encourage existing properties to redevelop sites; develop financial and incentive package	Department of Development	Phase I	●	
Promote Redevelopment Strategy to the Private Sector	Stimulate interest from a local or national concern	Department of Development	Phase I	●	
Zoning Change	Work with the property owner(s) or developer to create a new zoning district to accomplish redevelopment in accordance with the plan.	Department of Planning and Community Development	Phase II	●	
Traffic Plan	Refine and implement traffic plan, as needed, to support proposed development; phase activity accordingly	Public Works	Phase II	●	

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